ACTORS AND ACTRESSES

Brander Matthews

Laurence Hutton

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Actors and actresses of
Great Britain and the United
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1886.

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ACTORS AND ACTRESSES

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MACREADY AND FORREST; AND THEIR CONTEMPORARIES

ACTORS AND ACTRESSES

OF

GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES

FROM THE DAYS OF DAVID GARRICK TO
THE PRESENT TIME

EDITED BY

BRANDER MATTHEWS AND LAURENCE HUTTON

"Meanwhile we make ourselves happy among the Wits and the Players."

"MASKS AND FACES," *act i, scene 2.*

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MACREADY AND FORREST; AND THEIR CONTEMPORARIES

CASSELL & COMPANY, LIMITED
739 & 741 BROADWAY, NEW YORK

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PRESS OF HUNTER & BEACH,
NEW YORK.

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WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY.

1793—1873.

'This is the noblest Roman of them all;'
And he shall wear his victor's crown, and stand
Distinct amidst the genius of the land,
And lift his head aloft while others fall.
He hath not bowed him to the vulgar call,
Nor bid his countenance shine obsequious, bland,
But let his dark eye keep its high command,
And gather'd 'from the few' his coronal.
Yet unassuming hath he won his way!
And therefore fit to breathe the lines of him
Who gaily, once, beside the Avon River,
Shaped the great verse that lives, and shall live for ever.
But he now revels in eternal day,
Peerless amongst the earth-born cherubim.

B. W. PROCTER.

WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY.

William Charles Macready, born in London, March 3, 1793, was not destined by his parents for a player's life, although he was the son of a celebrated country actor and manager, who had conducted one of the great English circuits for several years with varying success, playing important characters himself. William was sent to a preparatory school, and afterwards to Rugby, with the design of giving him the advantages of a university training. Disaster came to the affairs of the father, however, and the education of the son was interrupted just at the moment when he was about to attain a high place in the school. Disappointed at this condition of things, but with much honesty of purpose, he turned to the profession of his father, taking his place in the active management of the circuit, and at last, in 1809, making his appearance as an actor. He had many opportunities for study, although as much work on his hands as he could well perform. He succeeded in placing the family affairs on a more prosperous footing, paid the pressing debts, and after several years of provincial work in such cities as Dublin, Bath and Edinburgh, found a place at last in London, that metropolis towards which the provincial English actor looks with hungry longing. He was engaged at the Covent Garden Theatre for

three years at the rising salary of fifteen, sixteen and eighteen pounds per week, opening there Sept. 16, 1816, as *Orestes* in the 'Distressed Mother.'

Kean was at this time in the full tide of his Drury Lane successes, while Kemble, Young, Abbott and O'Neill were the supports of the rival theatre. Into the latter group Macready entered, and his opening performance was regarded as a fair and promising effort. He was praised by Hazlitt, condemned by lesser writers, but speedily found a useful place by the side of the great men who at that day rendered the English stage illustrious.

It was during his early work in this theatre that Junius Brutus Booth made his bow there, entering upon the rivalry with Edmund Kean which produced so much ill-feeling; and, being placed above Macready in the casts as well as in public esteem causing the latter enduring heartburn.

Macready was the original *Rob Roy* in London, which did much to fix his fame in the minds of the doubting public. He had the good fortune to play with Mrs. Siddons on her reappearance for Charles Kemble's benefit in 1817, and to witness the farewell to the stage of John Kemble in the same year. His vacations were passed in professional visits to the provinces—especially to Newcastle or Bristol, where his father was manager. He spent much of the year 1822 in traveling, visiting France and Italy, where he saw the noted actors of both countries. He had the rare opportunity of witnessing several of the renowned Talma's most finished performances. In 1823, on his return, he played *Othello*, *Romeo*, *King John* and *Shylock*, beside some original parts, in the

then declining days of Covent Garden, and soon after severed his connection with the theatre, an act which caused much bitterness of feeling between the management and himself. He appeared at Drury Lane Oct. 13, 1823, as *Virginius*, following with a round of his other parts. He was married June 24, 1824, and made his first visit to America in 1826, landing in New York on Sept. 27. He opened at the Park Theatre Oct. 2, as *Virginius*, and played a round of his great characters with much success.

Going thence to Boston, Philadelphia and other cities his success was continued, his terms in America being £50 per night. He returned to London the following year, reappearing at Drury Lane Nov. 12, in 'Macbeth.' Taking an English company to Paris in 1828, he began a series of performances at the Salle Favart, opening in 'Macbeth.' It was an artistic success, resulting in pecuniary loss. Soon after his return to England, he became the manager of Covent Garden Theatre, opening there under favorable auspices, and producing many of the original plays with which his fame is identified. After two years of management, seriously hurt in fortune, but with reputation unimpaired, he began again his independent tours and at last assumed the management of Drury Lane Theatre, which he conducted with much success. Sailing for America again in 1843, he opened at the Park Theatre in New York on Sept. 25. His engagements on this occasion extended over one year, and were highly profitable. Returning to Europe in 1844, he repeated the Parisian experiment with an English company with the same result as on his former visit. During the next few years he was busy in his

profession both in London and the provinces. In 1846 Edwin Forrest visited England, and it was during this period that the relations hitherto pleasant between himself and Mr. Macready, by causes real or fancied, became estranged and finally broken. On Sept. 24, 1848, Macready landed at Boston to begin his last American engagement which resulted so disastrously.

On May 23, 1849, Mr. Macready embarked for his own country. After two years more of active service in his profession, on Feb. 26, 1851, Mr. Macready bade farewell to the stage, making his last appearance in Shakspere's *Macbeth* at the Haymarket Theatre. His severance from the stage was complete. He retired to Sherburne and devoted himself for the remainder of his life almost entirely to labors of devotion and usefulness. His charity was extensive, he himself visited the sick and the poor, but his greatest interest was in the cause of education among the poorer classes. In 1860, leaving Sherburne, he took up his residence at Cheltenham, and on April 3, of that year was married for the second time, his first wife having died Sept. 18, 1852. In the spring of 1871, Macready, in failing health, visited London to consult Sir Henry Thompson. At last, in spite of skill and excellent treatment, after three days of confinement, remaining conscious to the last, on April 27, 1873, he passed away. He was buried in Kensal Green.—These are the facts of a busy life in homely detail.

Macready was a scholar and a worker ; but he had no love for his calling. It had robbed him of the prize which seemed so close to his hand,—a good social position and lettered ease. Diligently he strove to rise from the lower ranks of his own profession,

but the superior qualities of his rivals stood ever in his way. He seemed to possess none of the requisites for an actor save industry. He was gaunt and angular, had an unmusical voice and an awkward manner, possessing none of that magnetic quality which wins the auditor oftentimes before the interest of the character has unfolded itself in the plot; but he was an enormous worker, with a soul boiling against his surroundings. With an ambition which jealousy tinctured and made contemptible, he spared no pains, he shunned no task, which could help him on towards the height on which his eyes were fixed. The heavy parts in the play fell to him, and his manner suited them admirably. He contended with such theatrical giants as the last of the Kembles, Charles Young, Junius Brutus Booth, and Edmund Kean. His style was unlike theirs; his work was cold, full of scholarship and of study, but not impulsive or spontaneous. He was compelled to give place for many years to men whose excellence and superiority he never could expect to surpass,—the idols of the public, by whose side Macready never held any other than a subordinate rank. It is said that when the play of the 'Apostate' was brought to the theatre by the author, the elder Booth, who was enamored of Miss O'Neill, then the darling of the London public and the greatest actress of the day, declined the part of *Pescara*, the villain, which he afterwards made so famous, and demanded that of *Hemeya*, the lover of *Florinda*, that he might play the love scenes with the O'Neill. This incident placed the part in Macready's hands; and it was the first great hit he made in London. The

character was soon resumed by Booth, for whom it was intended, and never afterwards acted by Macready. At length, one by one, the great men who had been in the way of his advancement were removed, and he stood in the front rank of his profession. All the harshness of his nature now appeared; he became haughty and offensive to all about him, subservient only to the aristocracy, but still working at his art with the spirit of a slave at the galleys. He was of an economical nature, and soon accumulated moderate wealth. He quarrelled with and left his old manager, and, aided by the wealthy friends whom he had never failed to propitiate, became himself a manager, inaugurating a series of revivals of old plays magnificent beyond the experience of that day. His research and scholarship attracted to the theatre learned men, and he gave a healthy impetus to dramatic taste, which will ever be his crown. He put himself prominently forward in these revivals, but they were none the less creditable and admirable. His career as a manager was marked by tyranny and cruelty. He had no friends in those who served him; he allowed no rivals to stand between him and the public. When Ryder once remonstrated with him upon some occasion of punished insubordination and told him he was a tyrant, Macready replied: "No, sir; I am not a tyrant,—I am a despot." He dearly loved a lord; he dearly hated his profession,—but it gave him all he had; without it he would be nothing. Like Congreve, before him, he had a snob's contempt for his art, and was more proud of his social position than of his reputation as an actor, well meriting

from the Voltaires of his day the rebuke of the old French philosopher who, on the well-known occasion of his visit to the author of the 'Double Dealer' and 'Love for Love,' so pointedly declared that he had called, not upon Congreve, the gentleman, but upon Congreve, the writer, adding, "If you had been no more than a gentleman, sir, I would not have been here."

Macready, however, attracted to the theatre some of the ablest contemporary critics; and the best stage editions of the plays of his time are those which bear the marks of his directing talent. He was the original of more than one hundred characters, and became at last recognized as the great representative English actor. He was the friend of Bulwer, of Dickens, of Forster, and of Talfourd; and was so tenacious of what he considered his dignity that he never permitted his children to see him in any of his characters for fear they might conceive contempt for his authority. He was a despot at home as well as the theatre. He kept a diary which speaks wonders for his diligence and his industry, but shows the violent, impetuous nature that was constantly leading him into difficulties, as constantly, however, to be regretted on bended knees. Some parts of the diary resemble the 'Confessions' of Rousseau. He seemed to bear a scourging monitor within his breast, and the monitor was ever applying the scourge.

His performances were models of mechanism; they lacked the divine spark which is called genius, but were penetrated by an intelligence which gave them unusually attractive power. He was greatest

in such parts as *Richelieu*, *Werner*, and *Cassius*, where a certain regularity of mind and body are not out of place, and where a dry subtlety and a studied declamation are accepted in lieu of magnetic powers. A good illustration of the self-consciousness of Macready is given in one of the pages of his diary. He is going to the first performance of Bulwer's 'Money,' after many rehearsals and much care on his part, and he ingenuously notes that he is certain the play will fail because there are two other good parts in the piece! These are the conflicting elements which form the character of one of the most noted actors of his age, or any age. But when all is said, common justice demands the acknowledgment that the modern theatre owes more to the industry of William C. Macready than to the example of any other actor who preceded or followed him. The stage needed just such a laborer to show to the followers of Edmund Kean that genius alone is not able to advance the highest purpose of any art. By his constant and untiring will he performed a herculean task, and he restored to the stage a more careful and more cultivated study of its aims and ends. With all the elaboration of modern French comedy he united some of the deepest subtleties of the old masters of the dramatic art; and the weird tragedy of 'Macbeth' under his skillful mechanism was endowed with such an amount of faithful detail that the play became almost a new work, and gave his own performance a place beyond the power of any rival. No career is so instructive to the young actor as that of Macready, in spite of the offensive nature of the man.

He occupied a place in the English theatre which at his retirement remained vacant for twenty years, until Henry Irving advanced to fill it with some of the same powerful qualities of his predecessor, much of his industry, but none of his coldness for his fellow-men. Macready's life was that of a scholar, a gentleman, and a good citizen. He fulfilled all the requirements of his social life, and retired at last from an art which he hated, rich in fortune, fame, and friends. True to his principles to the last hour of his professional life, he is said to have told his servant, when he was going to take his leave forever of the public, to "hold the curtain close when he came off, that he might not be annoyed by the adieus of those actors." He never concealed his contempt for Charles Kean, who rivalled him in his last years, and of whom he always spoke as "the son of his father." He was not popular in the United States. His style was not pleasing to the Americans, who were more used to the robust method of Cooper, or to the fiery genius of Booth, although he attracted the notice of scholars and the polite circles generally.

An account of the Astor Place Riot in New York has been reserved to close this brief memoir. The incident of Forrest's latest reception in England had been exaggerated in his favor when reported in his own land, and the cause became an international one,—the quarrel of John Bull and his young offspring, Brother Jonathan. Forrest's reception became a matter of patriotism; the democrats rallied as one man to vindicate his honor and that of the nation insulted in his person. It was well known that, while he had been denied a fair hearing in London, on account, perhaps, of

Macready's secret opposition, he had gained the applause of all the provinces through which he played, immediately after his London failure; but this fact did not weigh in the minds of his ardent friends. A storm was brewing which only awaited the return of Macready to burst and scatter death and destruction in its course.

Upon his reappearance in Sept. 1848, a plan was formed, but defeated by Forrest to whom it was submitted, that Macready should be hissed from the stage. Macready in one of his speeches before the curtain, alluded to this rumored attempt, in order to gain sympathy for himself. On May 7, 1849, he began his engagement at the Astor Place Opera House, in the character of *Macbeth*. The theatre was crowded by his enemies who greeted him with hostile demonstration. The play proceeded amid yells and hisses; at the end of the third act the performance was stopped, and Macready returned to his hotel. He prepared to return to England, but after some deliberation, acting upon the advice of his friends, he decided to hazard a second appearance in order that he might see how the public approved the opposition against him. An invitation to this effect, signed by many of the best citizens of New York was taken as a defiance by the admirers of Forrest, who prepared to meet the issue. On May 10, Macready was announced to reappear as *Macbeth*. The authorities had been called to the aid of the signers of the call, and when the doors were opened the theatre was instantly filled by a crowd of persons favorable to the actor, while the great mass of his enemies were excluded. These filled the streets, however, while the few who did gain admission showed

their opposition upon the appearance of Macready. At the first attempt the assailants were confronted by a body of Macready's friends within the theatre too powerful to be resisted; but the majority without added a threatening reinforcement when the decisive moment for violence should arrive.

The noise increased. Stones were hurled against the windows of the building, smashing them to atoms. The theatre was besieged on all sides by the infuriated mob, and its destruction seemed inevitable. At the end of the play Macready, in disguise, was hurried out of the front door, not recognized by the crowd, and barely escaped with his life. The militia was called out, the order was given to disperse, the angry crowd only hooted a reply of derision, the riot act was read amid the yells and oaths of the blood seeking rabble, stones and missles were hurled at the Seventh Regiment, the police gave way before the overpowering number of the mob, and at last, the soldiers, sore pressed, wounded and nearly demoralized by the assaults which they were not allowed to repulse, were ordered to close column *en masse*, load at will, and fire. Had it not been for this, the mob would have massacred the whole regiment. Their attack was at once furious and determined, but the soldiers responded in like measure. Of the rioters one hundred and thirty-four were killed outright; and over a hundred wounded, the remainder dispersed into the darkness.

Macready returned home full of manly regret for the horror which had clouded his American visit.

LAWRENCE BARRETT.

We reached Birmingham with so reduced a purse that my father had to call upon a friend for a loan to meet our immediate expenses. But the theatre opened; the company, which was still further reinforced, was pronounced very good, and all went on satisfactorily. Conway was the great favorite. My father, to whom I of course deferred, had selected *Romeo* for the character of my *début*, and accordingly I was now in earnest work upon it. Frequently in the course of my solitary attempts the exclamation would escape me, "I cannot do it;" and in some of my private rehearsals I had the discouraging remark of my father, "that will not do," to damp my courage and cast the gloomy shade of doubt on my exertions. Still, however, I persevered; and as the time of making the desperate plunge approached, my hopes were somewhat cheered by the encouragement of the lady who was rehearsing her part of *Juliet* with me (Mrs. Young from Drury Lane Theatre), and my father's admission of "very great improvement." By dint of practice and repeated rehearsals, alone and with the other performers, I had got by rote, as it were, every particular of place, gesture, feeling, and intonation—and well for me I had done so; for it made my heart beat more quickly to read in the street playbills the announcement of "The part of *Romeo* by a young gentleman, his first appearance on any stage," the emotions I experienced, on first crossing the stage, and coming forward in face of the lights and the applauding audience were almost overpowering. There was a mist before my eyes. I seemed to see nothing of the dazzling scene before me, and for some time I was like an automaton moving in certain

defined limits. I went mechanically through the variations in which I had drilled myself, and it was not until the plaudits of the audience awoke me from the kind of waking dream in which I seemed to be moving, that I gained my self-possession, and really entered into the spirit of the character and, I may say, felt the passion I was to represent. Every round of applause acted like inspiration on me: I "trod on air," became another being, or a happier self; and when the curtain fell at the conclusion of the play, and the intimate friends and performers crowded on the stage to raise up the *Juliet* and myself, shaking my hands with fervent congratulations, a lady asked me, "Well, sir, how do you feel now?" my boyish answer was without disguise, "I feel as if I should like to act it all over again."

WM. C. MACREADY: 'Reminiscences,' *chap.* 2, 1808–11.

Went to Covent Garden where I saw 'Virginius.' Macready very much pleased me. The truth of his performance is admirable. His rich mellow tones are delightful, and did he combine the expressive face of Kean with his own voice he would far surpass Kean, for in judgment I think him equal. The scene in which he betrothes his daughter is delightfully tender.

HENRY CRABB ROBINSON: 'Reminiscences,' *vol. i.*, *chap.* 25, January 1, 1821.

His successful impersonation of *Richard III.*, and his masterly delineation of *Virginius*, at once determined his position as an actor of the first class—second to none. All the parts in which I ever saw

him, such as *Orestes*, *Mirandola*, *William Tell*, *Rob Roy*, and *Claude Melnotte*, he certainly had made his own. He was a man of more reading and cultivation than Young; and while the latter amused himself in the hunting-field or the drawing-rooms of his aristocratic patrons, the former gave himself heart and soul to the study of his art, and greatly improved his powers by intellectual friction with such minds as those of Bulwer, Forster, Dickens, Knowles, and Albany Fonblanque. Moreover, he was what is called an original actor.

JULIAN CHARLES YOUNG: 'Memoir of Charles Mayne Young,' *chap.* 4, *pp.* 63–4.

Macready's performance of *Tell* (in Knowles' 'William Tell') is first rate. No actor ever affected me more than Macready did in some scenes of that play.

'Recollections of the Table Talk of Samuel Rogers.'

In Edmund Kean and Rachel we recognize types of genius; in Macready I see only a man of talent, but of talent so marked and individual that it approaches very near to genius; and indeed in justification of those admirers who would claim for him the higher title; I may say that Tieck, whose opinion on such a matter will be received with great respect, told me that Macready seemed to him a greater actor than either Kean or John Kemble; and he only saw Macready in the early part of his long and arduous career. . . . . Macready had a voice powerful, extensive in compass, capable of delicate modulation in quiet passages (though with a tendency to scream in violent passages), and having tones that thrilled and

tones that stirred tears. His declamation was mannered and unmusical; yet his intelligence always made him follow the winding meanings through the inventions of the verse, and never allowed you to feel as you feel in the declamation of Charles Kean and many other actors that he was speaking words which he did not thoroughly understand. . . . . Compared with any one we have seen since upon the stage Macready stands at such an immeasurable height that there must needs be a strange perplexity in the minds of his admirers on learning that while Kean and Young were still upon the stage Macready was very frequently called a mere melo-dramatic actor. In any sense which I can affix to this word it is absurd. He was by nature unsuited for some great tragic parts; but by his intelligence he was fitted to conceive, and by his organization fitted to express *characters*, and was not like a melo-dramatic actor limited to *situations*. Surely *King Lear*, *King John*, *Richard II.*, *Cassius*, and *Iago* are tragic parts! In them he was great, nor could he be surpassed in certain aspects of *Macbeth* and *Coriolanus*, although he wanted the heroic thew and sinew to represent these characters as wholes.

GEORGE HENRY LEWES: 'On Actors and the Art of Acting,' *chap.* 4, *pp.* 39, 40, 42, 43.

Macready's style was an amalgam of John Kemble and Edmund Kean. He tried to blend the classic art of the one with the impulsive intensity of the other; and he overlaid both with an outer plating of his own, highly artificial and elaborately formal. He had, too, a mania for inoculating every one from his own system:

he was a Narcissus in love with his own form-alities ; and he compelled, as far as he could, all with his influence to pay him the worship of his imitation. It was, I believe, Mrs. W. Clifford, mother-in-law of Harrison the singer, who well rebuked this tyrannic egotism. He had been remorselessly hammering a speech into his ears at rehearsal in his *stacccato*, extra-syllabic manner, when she coolly, but decidedly, told him that she much preferred her own style, and declined to change it for his, adding as she opened her eyes and expanded her hand and mouth, with a strong crescendo emphasis on the word *all:* "If this goes on, we shall be *ALL* Macreadys!"

GEORGE VANDENHOFF: 'Leaves from an Actor's Note Book,' *chap.* 1., *p.* 18.

Macready was never a favorite of ours, and is, in our opinion, indebted more to circumstances and to a cultivated talent for his reputation and success than to any inherent genius. His acting, though evincing the scholar and the artist, was too cold and mechanical for our taste. No one who witnessed him could for a moment divest himself of the knowledge that it was Mr. Macready who was on the stage instead of the imaginary creation of the poet. No matter who or what the character might be, still the *actor* was visible and the *art* apparent. His *Hamlet* was a soulless, automatic-like performance. His voice, like Kemble's, was exceedingly disagreeable—a deep, husky, gutteral sound of which he never could rid himself, and which at times rendered his reading almost ludicrous.

'The Actor,' *chap.* 6, *p.* 68.

It was in general by his management of his physical powers rather than by their natural qualities that Macready compelled admiration and swayed the sympathies. But this effect would have been impossible if all the details had not been suggested and continuously enlivened by a real and profound sensibility. He was, in fact, the only actor I have ever seen who was always under the apparent influence of the emotion he was depicting, and never gave the impression that he was seeking to represent what, at the time, at least, he was not actually feeling. It was this sensibility, controlled and guided by the technical skill so laboriously acquired, that lent a varied and attractive play of expression to features not naturally flexible, and to vocal organs that were, perhaps, better adapted to oratory than to acting. Booth's voice might have been compared to a violin, while Macready's had properties that more resembled those of a piano. There were rich tones in the middle register; there were deep notes employed occasionally with great effect; there was a clear, ringing resonance in the excitement of passion, and a peculiar capacity for purely intellectual expression. But there was no fine mellowness or sweetness; you were more often startled by a staccato than subdued by a melting *sostenuto;* and the highest notes were sometimes shrill and habitually tremulous. The musical flow of the verse was almost utterly lost; the sense alone directed the elocution, leading sometimes to abrupt changes of intonation that had the effect on the ear of a sudden change of key without modulation in a musical composition. On the other hand, no false note was ever struck, no shade of meaning was left

undiscriminated, no measured or monotonous recitation ever wearied the ear. In the "Never—never—never!" of the 'Stranger' the voice descended by octaves to a depth that reminded one of a great basso. In *Werner's* imploring cry,—

> *Ulric! Ulric!* there are crimes
> Made venial by the occasion,—

the utterance of the name, first, with a falling and then with a rising inflection, had the effect of the chromatic scale, descending and ascending, under the hand of a virtuoso. Even the defects of the intonation, the tremulous tones, the spasmodic jerks, seemed to aid the effect in the broken utterances of intense and struggling passion.

JOHN FOSTER KIRK: *Lippincott's Magazine*, June, 1884.

You will readily understand from this that to the actor the well-worn maxim that art is long and life is short has a constant significance. The older we grow the more acutely alive we are to the difficulties of our craft. I cannot give you a better illustration of this fact than a story which is told of Macready. A friend of mine, once a dear friend of his, was with him when he played *Hamlet* for the last time. The curtain had fallen, and the great actor was sadly thinking that the part he loved so much would never be his again. And as he took off his velvet mantle and laid it aside, he muttered almost unconsciously the words of *Horatio*, "Good night, sweet Prince;" then, turning to his friend, "Ah," said he, "I am just beginning to realize the sweetness, the

tenderness, the gentleness of this dear *Hamlet.*" Believe me, the true artist never lingers fondly upon what he has done. He is ever thinking of what remains undone; ever striving toward an ideal it may never be his fortune to attain.

HENRY IRVING: 'Harvard Address,' reported in the *Critic*, April 4, 1885.

Now let us look into old Drury Lane in the Macready days. Macready was notoriously one of the most violent tempered men in England, and in his 'Life' it is recorded that he prayed earnestly to be delivered from his violent fits of passion. Macready was a scholar and a gentleman, and most conscientious in his endeavors to make the stage what it ought to be,—a school of dramatic art to his audience. Naturally he had a very fine voice, susceptible of great modulation, especially in the representation of pathos. But, from an over-anxiety to make everything that he said reach every one of his audience, he had fallen into a painful habit of breaking up his sentences, which not only marred the rhythm of the verse he had to speak, but gave a "jerky" unevenness to his elocution that became at times irritating. Another drawback that he created for himself was this: he made the most horrible faces when his passions were aroused, insomuch that I was once nearly put out of the theatre for bursting out laughing in 'King Lear,' when the mad king *shrieked* out, "Look! look! a mouse," and he made such a tremendous face and rolled his eyes in such a supernatural manner at so small an animal, in his imagination, that if it had been at the end of the world

I could not have kept my countenance. Nevertheless, on looking back I feel fully convinced that a Shaksperean performance at Macready's theatre gave one a great zest for reading and trying to understand Shakspere.

Cornhill Magazine, September, 1885.

Though they usually got on very well together, my father [Henry Compton] and Macready did not always, in the words of the former, "hit the mark," especially when Macready would try to give my father, amongst others, a lesson in acting. I remember hearing him allude once or twice to a slight discussion that took place during the rehearsal of some piece in which my father was to play a Jack Tar. Macready sat watching one of the scenes for some time, and then stopped the rehearsal. Getting up very solemnly and deliberately, he delivered himself most impressively as follows: "Mr. Compton, I do not speak without due consideration and thought on the subject, and you must therefore excuse my saying that you have never been still for more than a minute at a time the whole of this scene." The answer was delivered just as impressively but not exactly in the measured tones of the tragedian: "Mr. Macready, I do not speak without due consideration and thought on the subject, and you will therefore excuse my saying, Did you ever know a British sailor just come on shore after a long voyage who *could* keep still for more than a moment at a time?" The tragedian fell back, and the rehearsal continued.

EDWARD COMPTON: 'Memoir of Henry Compton,' *chap.* 4.

Mr. Macready was a great actor, and a distinguished man in many ways; but you will, I dare say, remember that he would never, if he could help it, allow any one to stand on the same level with himself. I read once in *Punch* that they supposed Mr. Macready thought Miss Helen Faucit had a very handsome back, for, when on the stage with her, he always managed that the audience should see it and little else.

HELEN FAUCIT (Lady Martin): 'On some of Shakspere's Female Characters,' *p.* 293.

Macready came to Philadelphia in the season of 1826–27, to act at the Chestnut, and on the day of his arrival was entertained at dinner by the manager, Wood,—Jefferson being one of the guests. The next morning a rehearsal of 'Macbeth' occurred, and Jefferson, who was lame with gout, appeared with a cane in his hand. This was an infraction of the well-known rule, but it was understood in the company that Mr. Jefferson was ill, and therefore the breach of stage etiquette was not regarded. The comedian was to enact the *First Witch.* Macready immediately observed the cane, and, with his customary arrogance, determined to assert himself. "Tell that person," he said, "to put down his cane." The prompter, thus commanded, delivered his message. "Tell Mr. Macready," said Jefferson, "that I shall not act with him during his engagement;" and he left the stage. "Mr. Macready had a right," he afterwards remarked, "to object to the carrying of a cane at rehearsal; but it was obvious to me that this was not his point. He chose to disregard the fact that we were, and

had met as, social equals, and to omit the civility of a word of inquiry which would have procured immediate explanation. His purpose was to overbear and humiliate me, so as to discipline and subjugate the rest of the company. It was a rude exercise of authority, and its manner was impertinent."

WILLIAM WINTER: 'The Jeffersons,' *pp.* 76–77.

For his benefit, at New Orleans, Mr. Macready produced (as an after-piece!) the 'School for Scandal,' in three acts! cutting out the great scandal scene, the picture scene, and several other scenes; so as to confine it as much as possible to the development of the 'Plots of Joseph Surface' which character he played, (so far as as he remembered the words—for he was very imperfect,) and which consequently became, of course, the feature; and as far as he could make it so—the only feature of the comedy. He insisted, too, (to save himself trouble in dressing, I suppose,) on wearing his own modern clothes; black coat and pantaloons. I played *Charles Surface*, but of course did not follow his example in this gross anachronism of costume.

GEORGE VANDENHOFF: 'Leaves from an Actor's Note Book,' *p.* 231.

In rehearsing the play of 'Virginius,' an occurrence took place which caused a hearty laugh at the expense of Mr. William Forrest (brother to the tragedian), who was the *Icilius*. Caught by the natural tone and manner of Macready, who, turning suddenly, said: "Will *you* lead *Virginia* in, or do you wait for me to do it?" "Which ever you please, Mr. Macready," was the ready

answer, followed by such a laugh as only actors can enjoy.

F. C. Wemyss : 'Twenty-six Years of the Life of an Actor,' *p.* 118.

He was naturally an amiable man, with a most passionate temper, and subject to terrible ebullitions on the slightest and most trivial occasions. I'll mention a little incident which I very well recall, to illustrate this. Macready always came to the theatre about two hours before the curtain went up, and he would sit down and chat, and talk, and grumble about the things which had displeased him the day before, and make all sorts of trivial complaints. On one occasion he started up suddenly and called to his man, Thompson by name—"Thompson, Great Heavens! what a beast you are! Thompson, I don't know why in thunder I should be bothered and annoyed and pestered by such an infernal scoundrel!" "What —what—is the matter?" gasped the frightened Thompson. "Look round and see, you scoundrel; don't you see you have forgotten something?" "I don't know, indeed, what I have forgotten," said Thompson. "*My book of beards*," roared Macready. Thompson rushed out into the street and across to the Revere House for the book, and then Macready turned to me and said, "Brougham, did you ever know such a wretch? Did you ever see such a consummate scoundrel? I ask you how can I preserve the equilibrium of mind I require, for the arduous labors I have to undergo, with such a villain?" At last Thompson rushed in and laid the book of beards, before him. Again Macready eyed him and flew at him in a violent rage

once more. "Thompson," he said, "when I took you out with me I promised your people I would take as much care of you, confound you, as I could, as much as your brutal nature would permit anybody to do, and yet of such a night as this, with the snow on the ground, you go out *without an overcoat.*" That was a characteristic scene between Macready and his man, and well illustrates his tendency to get into a terrible rage about nothing.

JOHN BROUGHAM: reported in *Boston Times*, Oct. 25, 1874.

Macready's sensitiveness shrouded itself within an artificial manner; but a more delightful companion could not be,—not only on account of his learning and accomplishment, but of his uncompromising liberality of opinion, and his noble strain of meditative thought. He enjoyed playing *Jacques*—thinking that character singularly like himself; and it was so, in one part of his character: but there was, besides the moralizing tendency, a chivalrous spirit of rare vigilance, and an unsleeping tenderness and social beneficence, which accounted for and justified the idolatry with which he was regarded, through all trials occasioned by the inevitable temper with which he manfully struggled.

HARRIET MARTINEAU: 'Autobiography,' *vol. i.*, *period* 6, *section* 2.

Poor dear William! I never thought him more interesting, however. To see a man who is exhibiting himself every night on the stage, blushing like a young girl in a private room is a beautiful phenomenon to me. His wife whispered into my ear, as we sat on the

sofa together: "Do you know poor William is in a perfect agony to-day at having been brought here in that great coat. It is a stage great coat, but was only worn by him twice; the piece it was bought for did not succeed, but it was such an expensive coat, I would not let him give it away; and doesn't he look well in it?" I wish Jeannie had seen him in the coat—magnificent fur neck and sleeves, and such frogs on the front. He did look well, but so heartily ashamed of himself.

JANE WELSH CARLYLE: 'Letters and Memorial,' *vol. i., Letter* 42, March, 1843.

He speaks in his diary of the ugliness which went against him at his first appearance. Perhaps in his youth he was somewhat puffy—I have heard so—but when I first saw him in his middle age, his face and figure showed little flesh, his jaw was square, there was a singular intensity in his eyes, he looked like a passionate, thinking man, and his presence was commanding: you would hardly pass him in the street without saying, "Who can that be?" His first aspect was perhaps severe, but what a charm there is in a grave countenance when it breaks into a pleasant smile—a smile of humor or of kindness!

LADY POLLOCK: 'Macready as I Knew Him,' *p.* 5.

Therefore it was that the great audience which was gathered together to listen to his last farewell at Drury Lane were moved to an unusual degree. . . . . When he came on the stage after his performance of *Macbeth*, in his daily dress, and alone, they bent eagerly forward. Their agitation was evident; but it

was dominated by the desire to hear every syllable he uttered. He spoke as suited the occasion, simply and briefly; his accents were tender yet quite distinct. At the end his voice faltered, and tears, which he quietly wiped away, fell from his eyes. The tears of his hearers flowed fast; and a voice from the gallery shouted out in lamentation, "The Last of the Mohicans!" Then arose a cheer loud and long, pausing for an instant, only to be renewed again and again with increasing power. Of the large numbers who failed to gain admittance, many were gathered outside the walls and echoed the applause from within.

Ibid., *pp.* 139–40.

On one occasion he [the elder Booth] took every member of his family to witness Macready's *Werner*. The writer can remember only a sombre man with peculiar brows and gutteral voice, dragging through what seemed to her a very dismal tragedy; but Mr. Booth pronounced it "a most exquisite performance."

Asia Booth Clarke: 'The Elder and the Younger Booth,' *vol. i.*, *p.* 113.

February 22, 1833.—Yesterday I omitted to rebuke myself for the petulance with which I rated the man who carries my clothes. If we examine our relations with mankind we have no right to show anger to any man; it is the right only of the tyrant over his slave, and there is first the right of tyranny in the abstract to be established. To be angry with any one is to assume a pretension to superiority that men are least disposed to allow. Why cannot I reflect before I commit myself in word or action? . . . . .

EXETER, March 30, 1835.—I begin to despair of obtaining that mastery over myself, which I owe to myself, to my children, and to society. It is no excuse nor plea that I suffer so keenly as I do from regret and shame at my own intemperance. I feel the folly, the madness, the provoking extravagance of my behavior, treating men like slaves, and assuming a power over them which is most unjustifiable and most dangerous, and yet contrition and stinging reflection seem to have no power in the punishment they inflict or of producing amendment. I do not wish to harbor one ungrateful thought, for though my public life is far, far from happy, yet my domestic happiness is more than an equipoise to its annoyances ; yet I cannot think of my education, and the ills derived from the counsel and example afforded me, without heartfelt repinings. To God Almighty I lift my prayer, that I may be enabled to subdue this hateful and degrading vice of temper, so as to help my blessed children in the first best worldly endeavor of governing their own words.

January 5, 1839.—Read my strange note from some woman threatening to destroy herself for love of me ! The ugly never need despair after this.

February 3, 1851.—My theatrical engagement is concluded. My professional life may be said to be ended. I have only to act one night more for my own benefit, in regard to which I am bound to no man ; I have acquitted myself of my dues—I am free ! Nearly fifty-eight years of my life are numbered : that life was begun in a very mediocre position—mere respectability ; my father maintained a good character as an honest and a liberal man ; my mother was a woman of good family, of superior intellect, excellent

heart, and of high character, but at ten years of age I lost her counsel and example. My heart's thanks are constantly offered to God Almighty for the share of good he has permitted to be alloted to me in this life. I have attained the loftiest position in the art to which my destiny directed me, have gained the respect of the honored and respected, and the friendship of the highly-gifted, amiable, and distinguished. My education, my habits, my turn of mind did not suggest to me the thought of amassing wealth, or I might have been rich; I have what I trust will prove competence, and most grateful am I for its possession. My home is one of comfort and of love, and I look towards it with cheerfulness and delightful security of heart, and most gratefully and earnestly do I bless the name and thank the bounty of Almighty God, Who has vouchsafed such an indulgence to me, undeserving as I have been, and sinner as I am. Blessed be His name? Amen.

WM. C. MACREADY: 'Diary.'

Charles Sumner (Dec. 10, 1850) wrote from Boston (United States): "You will stand out hereafter as the last great actor of the English stage. It must be so; and I rejoice that associated with that position will be so much of private worth and general culture as we admire in you. Of you we may say what Cicero said in his oration for Sextius, of the great Roman actor Æsopus, that he chose the noblest parts both as an actor and a citizen. '*Mehercule, semper partium inrepublicâ, tanquam inscenâ, optimarum.*' I cannot do more than to wish for you the success in future fame which attended Æsopus.

Ibid.

Farewell, Macready, since to-night we part;
Full-handed thunders often have confessed
Thy power well used to move the public breast.
We thank thee with our voice and from our heart.
Farewell, Macready, since this night we part;
Go, take thine honors home; rank with the best,
Garrick and statelier Kemble and the rest
Who made a nation purer through their art.
Thine is it that our drama did not die,
Nor flicker down to brainless pantomime.
And those gilt gauds men-children swarm to see.
Farewell, Macready; moral, grave, sublime;
Our Shakspere's bland and universal eye
Dwells pleased, through twice a hundred years,
on thee.

ALFRED TENNYSON.

EDWIN FORREST.

1806–1872.

No fading laurels did his genius reap ;
With Shakspere's best interpreters full high
His name is graven on Fame's temple-front,
With Kean's and Kemble's,—names that will
not die
While memory venerates the poet's shrine,
And holds his music more than half divine.

FRANCIS A. DURIVAGE.

EDWIN FORREST.

Edwin Forrest was born in the city of Philadelphia, March 9, 1806, his father, a Scotchman, having emigrated to America during the last year of the preceding century. The boy, like many others of his profession was designed for the ministry, and before the age of eleven the future Channing had attracted admiring listeners by the music of his voice and the aptness of his mimicry. His memory was remarkable, and he would recite whole passages of his preceptor's sermons. Perched upon a chair or stool, and crowned with the proud approval of family and friends, the young mimic filled the hearts of his listeners with fervent hopes of his coming success in the fold of their beloved church. These hopes were destined to be met with disappointment. The bias of the future leader of the American stage was only faintly outlined as yet: his hour of development was still to come.

He must have learned early the road to the theatre, permitted to go by the family, or going, perhaps, without the knowledge or consent of his seniors in the overworked household; for, before he had passed his tenth year, our young sermonizer was a member of a Thespian club, and before he was eleven he had made his appearance at one of the regular theatres in

a female character, but with most disastrous results. He soon outgrew the ignominy of his first failure, however, and again and again sought to overcome its disgrace by a fresh appearance. To his appeals the irate manager lent a deaf ear. The sacred portal that leads to the enchanted ground of the stage was closed against young Forrest, the warden being instructed not to let the importunate boy pass the door. At last, in desperation, he resolved to storm the citadel, to beat down the faithful guard, and to carry the war into the enemy's camp. One night he dashed past the astonished guardian of the stage entrance just as the curtain fell upon one of the acts of a play. He emerged before the footlights, eluding all pursuit, dressed as a harlequin, and before the audience had recovered from its astonishment at this scene not set down in the bills, the baffled, but not subdued, aspirant had delivered the lines of an epilogue in rhyme with so much effect that, before he could be seized by the astounded stage manager and hurled from the theatre, he had attracted public notice, successfully won his surprised audience, and not only secured immunity from punishment for his temerity, but actually gained that respect in the manager's estimation which he had so long and so vainly striven to acquire.

At last Forrest was promised an appearance at the Walnut-street house, then one of the leading theatres of the country. He selected *Young Norval* in Home's tragedy of 'Douglas,' and on Nov. 27, 1820, the future master of the American stage, then fourteen years of age,—a boy in years, a man in character,—announced as "A young Gentleman of this City," surrounded by

a group of veteran actors who had for many years shared the favor of the public, began a career which was as auspicious at its opening as it was splendid in its maturity. At his entrance he won the vast audience at once by the grace of his figure and the modest bearing that was natural to him. Something of that magnetism which he exercised so effectively in late years now attracted all who heard him, and made friends even before he spoke.

He was allowed to reappear as *Frederick* in 'Lover's Vows,' repeating his first success; and on Jan. 8, 1821, he benefited as *Octavian* in the 'Mountaineers,' a play associated with the early glories of Edmund Kean. In this year, also, he made his first and only venture as a manager, boldly taking the Prune Street Theatre, Philadelphia, and giving a successful performance of *Richard III.*, which not only pleased the audience but brought him a few dollars of profit. He made many attempts to secure a regular engagement in one of the Western circuits, where experience could be gained, and at last, after many denials, he was employed by Collins and Jones to play leading juvenile parts in their theatres in Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and Lexington. Thus at the age of sixteen or eighteen Edwin Forrest enrolled himself as a regular member of a theatrical company, and broke loose from trade forever.

Of his professional progress here we have but poor accounts. He seems to have been very popular, and to have had an experience larger than he had heretofore enjoyed. He played with the elder Conway, and was affected by the grandeur of that actor's *Othello*, a

study which served Forrest well when in late years he inherited the character.

Jane Placide, who inspired the first love of Edwin Forrest, was an actress who combined talent, beauty and goodness. Her character would have softened the asperities of his, and led him by a calmer path to those grand elevations towards which Providence had directed his footsteps. Baffled in his love, however, and believing Caldwell to be his rival and enemy, he challenged him, but was rebuked by the silent contempt of his manager, whom the impulsive and disappointed lover "posted."

The hard novitiate of Edwin Forrest was now drawing near its close. Securing a stock engagement with Charles Gilfert, manager of the Albany Theatre, he opened there in the early fall, and played for the first time with Edmund Kean, then on his second visit to America. The meeting with this extraordinary man, and the attention he received from him were foremost among the directing influences of Forrest's life. To his last hour he never wearied of singing the praises of Kean, whose genius filled the English speaking world with admiration. Two men more unlike in mind and body can scarcely be imagined. Until now Forrest had seen no actor who represented in perfection the impassioned school of which Kean was the master. He could not have known Cooke even in the decline of that great tragedian's power, and the little giant was indeed a revelation. He played *Iago* to Kean's *Othello*, *Titus* to his *Brutus*, and *Richmond* to his *Richard III.*

In the interval which preceded the opening of the Bowery Theatre, New York, Forrest appeared at the

Park for the benefit of Woodhull, playing *Othello.* He made a pronounced success, his old manager, sitting in front, profanely exclaiming, "By God, the boy has made a hit!" This was a great event, as the Park was then the leading theatre of America, and its actors were the most famons and exclusive.

He opened at the Bowery Theatre in November, 1826, as *Othello*, and made a brilliant impression. His salary was raised from twenty-eight to forty dollars per week. From this success may be traced the first absolute hold made by Edwin Forrest upon the attention of cultivated auditors and intelligent critics. The Bowery was then a very different theatre from what it afterwards became, when the newsboys took forcible possession of its pit and the fire-laddies were the arbiters of public taste in its neighborhood.

An instance of Forrest's moral integrity may be told here. He had been approached by a rival manager, after his first success, and urged to secede from the Bowery and join the other house at a much larger salary. He scornfully refused to break his word, although his own interests he knew must suffer. His popularity at this time was so great that, when his contract for the season had expired, he was instantly engaged for eighty nights, at a salary of two hundred dollars a night.

The success which had greeted Forrest on his first appearance in New York, was renewed in every city in the land. Fortune attended fame, and filled his pockets, as the breath of adulation filled his heart. He had paid the last penny of debt left by his father, and had seen a firm shelter raised over the head of his living family. With a patriotic feeling for all things

American, Forrest, about this time, formed a plan for the encouragement or development of an American drama, which resulted in heavy money losses to himself, but produced such contributions to our stage literature as the 'Gladiator,' 'Jack Cade' and 'Metamora.' After five years of constant labor he felt that he had earned the right to a holiday, and he formed his plans for a two years' absence in Europe. A farewell banquet was tendered him by the citizens of New York, and a medal was struck in honor of the occasion. Bryant, Halleck, Leggett, Ingraham and other distinguished men were present. This was an honor which had never before been paid to an American actor.

He had been absent about two years when he landed in New York in September, 1836. On his appearance at the Walnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia, he was received with unprecedented enthusiasm. He gave six performances only, on this occasion, and each saw a repetition at the scene of the beginning of the engagement. The receipts were the largest ever known in that house.

On Sept. 19, 1836, Forrest embarked once more for the mother country, this time with serious purpose. After a speedy and uneventful passage he reached England, and at once set about the preliminary business of his British engagement, which began Oct. 17, 1836. He was the first really great American actor who had appeared in London as a rival of the English tragedians; for Cooper was born in England, though always regarded as belonging to the younger country. His opening part was *Spartacus* in the 'Gladiator.' The play was condemned, the actor applauded. In *Othello*,

in *Lear*, and in *Macbeth* he achieved instant success. He began his engagement Oct. 17 and closed Dec. 19, having acted *Macbeth* seven times, *Othello* nine, and *King Lear* eight. A dinner at the Garrick Club was offered and accepted. Here he sat down with Charles Kemble and Macready; Sergeant Talfourd was in the chair.

It was during this engagement he met his future wife, Miss Catherine Sinclair. In the latter part of June, 1837, the marriage took place in St. Paul's Church, Covent Garden. Mr. and Mrs. Forrest soon after embarked for America. The tragedian resumed his American engagements Nov. 15, 1837, at the old Chestnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia. Presented to his friends, his wife at once made a deep and lasting impression. Her native delicacy of mind and refinement of manners enchanted those who hoped for some such influence to be exerted in softening the rough vigor and democratic downrightness of the man. Domestic discord came too soon, however, and in an evil hour for himself, in an evil hour for his art and for the struggling drama in America, Edwin Forrest threw open the doors of his home to the scrutiny of the world, and appealed to the courts to remove the skeleton which was hidden in his closet. With the proceedings of that trial, which resulted in divorce, alimony, and separation, this memoir has nothing to do.

Edwin Forrest leaving the court room a defeated man, was instantly raised to a popularity with the masses beyond anything even he had before experienced. He began an engagement soon after at the Broadway Theatre, opening as *Damon*. The house was crowded to suffocation. The engagement of sixty nights was

unparalleled in the history of the American drama for length and profit. But despite the flattering applause of the multitude, life never again had for him the smiling aspect it had so often worn before. The applause which filled his ears, the wealth which flowed in upon him could not improve that temper which had never been amiable and all the hard stories of his life belong to this period.

On Sept. 20, 1852, he reappeared at the Broadway Theatre, New York. In February, 1853, 'Macbeth' was produced in grand style, with new scenery and appointments. The tragedy was played on twenty consecutive nights, then by far the longest run of any Shaksperean play in America. The cast was very strong: it included Conway, Duff, Davenport, Pope, Davidge, Barry and Madame Ponisi.

On Sept. 17, 1860, after an absence of nearly four years, Edwin Forrest appeared again on the stage. He was engaged by James Nixon, and began his contract of one hundred nights at Niblo's Garden, New York, in the character of *Hamlet*. The long retirement only increased the curious interest which centred round his historic name. Upon his opening night the seats were sold at auction. His success in Philadelphia rivalled that of New York. In Boston the vast auditorium of the grandest theatre in America was found too small to contain the crowds he drew.

Severe attacks of gout were beginning to tell upon that herculean form, sapping and undermining it; and in 1865, while playing *Damon* at the Holiday Street Theatre, in Baltimore, the weather being very cold and the theatre open to draughts, he was seized with a sudden illness, which was followed

by very serious results. Suffering the most intense agony, he was able to get to the end of the part; but when his robes were laid aside and physicians summoned, it was found to his horror that he had suffered a partial paralysis of the sciatic nerve. In an instant the sturdy gait, the proud tread of the herculean actor were forever gone; for he never regained complete control of his limb, a perceptible hobble being the legacy of the dreadful visitation. His right hand was almost powerless and he could not hold his sword.

In 1866 he went to California, urged by the manager in San Francisco. His last engagement in New York took place in February, 1871. He played *Lear* and *Richelieu*,—his two greatest parts. On the night of March 25, 1872, Forrest opened in *Lear* at the Globe Theatre, Boston. 'Lear' was played six nights. During the second week he was announced for *Richelieu* and *Virginius;* but he caught a violent cold on Sunday, and labored sorely on Monday evening through the part of *Richelieu.* On Tuesday he repeated the performance, against the advice of friends and physicians. Rare bursts of his old power lighted up the play, but he labored piteously on against his increasing illness and threatened pneumonia. When stimulants were offered he rejected them, declaring "that if he died to-night he should still be his old royal self."

Announced for *Virginius* the following evening, he was unable to appear. A severe attack of pneumonia developed itself. He was carried to his hotel, and his last engagement was brought to an abrupt and melancholy end. As soon as he was able to move he left Boston for his home in Philadelphia, resting on his way only a day in New York. As the summer passed away,

the desire for work grew stronger and stronger, and he decided to re-enter public life, but simply as a reader of the great plays in which he had as an actor been so successful. The result was a disappointment. On Dec. 11, 1872, he wrote to Oakes his last letter, saying sadly, but fondly, "God bless you ever, my dear and much beloved friend."

When the morning of Dec. 12 came, his servant, hearing no sound in his chamber at his general hour of rising, became alarmed, opened his master's door, and found there, cold in death upon his bed, the form of the great tragedian. His arms were crossed upon his bosom, and he seemed to be at rest. The stroke had come suddenly. With little warning, and without pain, he had passed away.

The dead man's will was found to contain several bequests to old friends and servants, and an elaborate scheme by which his fortune, in the hands of trustees, was to be applied to the erection and support of a retreat for aged actors, to be called "The Edwin Forrest Home." The idea had been long in his mind, and careful directions were drawn up for its practical working; but the trustees found themselves powerless to realize fully the hopes and wishes of the testator. A settlement had to be made to the divorced wife, who acted liberally towards the estate; but the amount withdrawn seriously crippled it, as it was deprived at once of a large sum of ready money. An informality in the drawing of the will involved the trustees in trouble, under the laws of the State of New York, in which much of the property lay. Large fees to lawyers still further hampered them, and their income at present is insufficient without aid to further

the testator's purpose, while a claimant has arisen to demand possession of the estate on the ground of propinquity of blood. And thus the great ambition of the tragedian to be a benefactor to his profession was destined to come almost to naught. No sooner had the giant frame been laid in the grave than it was shown to the world how utterly vain and useless had been his accumulation of wealth for the laudable purposes for which he had designed it. Of this happily little he recks now. He has parted with all the cares of life and has at last found rest.

Forrest's greatest Shaksperean parts were *Lear*, *Othello*, and *Coriolanus*. The first grew mellow and rich as the actor grew in years while it still retained much of its earlier force. His *Othello* suffered with the decline of his faculties, although his clear conception of all he did was apparent to the end in the acting of every one of his parts. *Coriolanus* died with him, the last of all the Romans. He was greatest, however, in such parts as *Virginius*, *William Tell*, and *Spartacus*. Here his mannerisms of gait and utterance were less noticeable than in his Shaksperean characters, or were overlooked in the rugged massiveness of the creation. *Hamlet*, *Richard* and *Macbeth* were out of his temperament, and added nothing to his fame ; but *Richelieu* is said to have been one of his noblest and most impressive performances. He was in all things marked and distinctive. His obtrusive personality often destroyed the harmony of the portrait he was painting, but in his inspired moments, which were many, his touches were sublime. He passed over quiet scenes with little elaboration, and dwelt strongly upon the grand features of the characters he repre-

sented. His *Lear*, in the great scenes, rose to a majestic height, but fell in places almost to mediocrity. His art was unequal to his natural gifts. He was totally unlike his great contemporary and rival, Macready, whose attention to detail gave to every performance the harmony of perfect work.

This memoir may fitly close with an illustrative anecdote of the great actor. Toward the end of his professional career he was playing an engagement at St. Louis. He was very feeble in health, and his lameness was a source of great anxiety to him. Sitting at a late supper in his hotel one evening, after a performance of *King Lear*, with his friend J. B. McCullough, of the *Globe-Democrat*, that gentleman remarked to him, "Mr. Forrest, I never in my life saw you play *Lear* so well as you did to-night." Whereupon the veteran almost indignantly replied, rising slowly, and laboriously from his chair to his full height. "Play *Lear!* What do you mean, sir? I do not *play Lear!* I play *Hamlet*, *Richard*, *Shylock*, *Virginius*, if you please, but by God, sir, I *am Lear!*"

Nor was this wholly imaginative. Ingratitude of the basest kind had rent his soul. Old friends were gone from him; new friends were but half-hearted. His hearthstone was desolate. The public, to whom he had given his best years, was becoming impatient of his infirmities. The royalty of his powers he saw by degrees torn from his decaying form. Other kings had arisen on the stage, to whom his old subjects now showed a reverence once all his own. The mockery of his diadem only remained. A wreck of the once proud man who had despised all weakness, and had ruled his kingdom with imperial sway, he now stood

alone. Broken in health, and in spirit, deserted, forgotten, unkinged, he might well exclaim, "I am *Lear!*"

LAWRENCE BARRETT.

In 1817, Mr. Durang tells us, that, as a mere boy, for the lack of female performers, young Forrest played girls' characters frequently. He was then eleven years old. When in Louisville, in 1820, Forrest and James M. Scott, known as "Long Tom Coffin," played a pair of dandies with *éclat;* and in a piece called the 'Tailor in Distress,' Forrest took a negro part with so much African nature that he seemed the very incarnation of the race.

H. D. STONE: 'Theatrical Reminiscences,' *chap.* 14, *p.* 77.

It has been doubted by some if Forrest ever performed feats of agility in the circus, but there is no mistake about it. He performed at the North Pearl-street Ampitheatre [Albany, N. Y.] for Bill Gates's benefit, on a wager, in a still vaulting act, creating shouts of laughter and applause from those present who knew it was Ned. The dress he wore on that occasion was from the wardrobe of the establishment, and consisted of an enormous pair of Turkish trousers, breastplate and fly, his feet were adorned by a pair of sheepskin pumps,—the kind worn by a numerous train of auxiliaries. But few knew him, and much fun was in vogue at Ned's expense. For Charley Young's benefit he also made a flying leap through a

barrel of *red fire*, singeing his eyebrows all off. This was his last "big leap" in the show business.

Ibid, chap. 27, *p.* 148.

Foremost among a host of tyros stood Edwin Forrest. He had the advantage of some useful practice, and had already achieved a trifling reputation in the South and West. . . . . He possessed [1826] a fine, untaught face and good manly figure, and, though unpolished in his deportment, his manners were frank and honest, and his uncultivated taste, speaking the language of truth and nature, could be readily understood.

JOE COWELL: 'Thirty Years Among the Players,' *part ii., chap.* 7.

A new theatre in the Bowery, a low quarter of the city, was opened during my sojourn in New York. It was handsome and commodious; but its locality was an objection insuperable to the fashion of the place. Messieurs Conway and Forrest were members of the *corps dramatique*, which was composed of some of the best actors in the country. I was very anxious for poor Conway's success in the States, holding him in great esteem as a thoroughly gentlemanly man, and entitled to credit for considerable talent. The part he acted on the night I saw him was *Brutus*, in 'Julius Cæsar.' The performance was even, perhaps too tame; unrelieved by any start of enthusiasm, and correctly described by that chilling word "respectable." Forrest was the *Mark Antony*. He was a very young man; not more, I believe, than one or two and twenty. The "Bowery Lads," as they

were termed, made great account of him, and he certainly was possessed of remarkable qualifications. His figure was good, though perhaps a little too heavy; his face might be considered handsome, his voice excellent. He was gifted with extraordinary strength of limb, to which he omitted no opportunity of giving prominence. He had received only the commonest education, but in his reading of the text he showed the discernment and good sense of an intellect much upon a level with that of Conway; but he had more energy, and was altogether distinguished by powers that, under proper direction, might be productive of great effect. I saw him again in 'William Tell.' His performance was marked by vehemence and rude force that told upon his hearers; but of pathos in the affecting interview with his son there was not the slightest touch, and it was evident that he had not rightly understood some passages in his text. My observation upon him was not hastily pronounced. My impression was that, possessed of natural requisites in no ordinary degree, he might, under careful discipline, confidently look forward to eminence in his profession. If he would give himself up to a severe study of his art, and improve himself by the practice he could obtain before the audiences of the principal theatres of Great Britain, those of Edinburgh, Liverpool, Glasgow, Birmingham, Manchester, etc. (then good dramatic schools), he might make himself a first-rate actor. But to such a course of self-denying training I was certain he never would submit, as its necessity would not be made apparent to him. The injudicious and ignorant flattery, and the factious

applause of his supporters in low-priced theatres, would fill his purse, would blind him to his deficiency in taste and judgment, and satisfy his vanity, confirming his self opinion of attained perfection. I spoke of him constantly as a young man of unquestionable promise, but I doubted his submission to the inexorable conditions for reaching excellence. The event has been as I anticipated. His robustious style gains applause in the coarse melodramas of 'Spartacus' and 'Metamora;' but the traits of character in Shakspere and the poetry of the legitimate drama are beyond his grasp. My forebodings were prophetic.

W. C. MACREADY: 'Reminiscences,' *chap.* 21, 1826.

OCTOBER 3, 1843.—Dined with Forrest; met a very large party, too large for comfort, but it was most kindly intended. Bryant, with whom I talked very little, Halleck, and Inman, the artist, were of the party. Our day was very cheerful. I like all I see of Forrest very much. He appears a clear-headed, honest, kind man; what can be better?

Ibid.: 'Diary.'

EDINBURGH, March 2, 1846.—Acted *Hamlet* really with particular care, energy, and discrimination. The audience gave less applause to the first soliloquy than I am in the habit of receiving, but I was bent on acting the part, and I felt, if I can feel at all, that I had strongly excited them, and that their sympathies were cordially, indeed, enthusiastically, with me. On reviewing the performance, I can conscientiously pronounce it one of the very best I have given of *Hamlet.*

At the waving of the handkerchief before the play, and "I must be idle," a man on the right side of the stage—upper boxes or gallery, but said to be upper boxes—hissed! The audience took it up, and I waved the more, and bowed derisively and contemptuously to the individual. The audience carried it, though he was very staunch to his purpose. It discomposed me, and, alas! might have ruined many; but I bore it down. I thought of speaking to the audience, if called on, and spoke to Murray about it, but he very discreetly dissuaded me. Was called for, and very warmly greeted. Ryder came and spoke to me, and told me that the hisser was observed, and said to be a Mr. W——, who was in company with Mr. Forrest! The man writes in the *Journal*, a paper depreciating me, and eulogizing Mr. F., sent to me from this place.

March 3.—Fifty-three years have I lived to-day. Both Mr. Murray and Mr. Ryder are possessed with the belief that Mr. Forrest was the man who hissed last night. I begin to think he was the man.

Ibid.

On October 17 he made his bow to the British public. Old Drury was crowded from pit to ceiling with an eager and excited audience. All the friends of the popular actors of the day congregated in force. The American minister, and all the fellow-countrymen of Forrest, were likewise present. There was silence until *Spartacus, the Gladiator*, came forward, when a hearty shout of welcome broke forth from all parts of the house. His magnificent person astonished those who had never seen him. His rich and powerful

voice thrilled all who had not heard it. His earnest, impassioned acting quite electrified the audience. At the end he was overwhelmed with applause, and it was plain he had secured a hold on British sympathies, which he never lost. There was a clique present who were disappointed by his success, and when he appeared, at the general demand, to make his acknowledgments, they raised the cry of "Shakspere, Shakspere!" Their object was evident. The partisans of the popular actors of the time knew it would be easier to arouse opposition to a foreigner should he attempt a *rôle* the public were accustomed to see played according to the idiosyncrasies of the tragedians who had successfully assumed them, and which only proved my judgment was correct in suggesting an original part for Forrest's *début.*

HENRY WYCKOFF: 'Reminiscences of an Idler,' *chap.* 37, *pp.* 376–7.

I was taken by one of his great admirers to see him as *Metamora*, and was surprised to find the house [the old Chatham Theatre] more than three-fourths empty. He, however, acted with his accustomed vigor; and I freely acknowledge that, for power of destructive energy, I never heard anything on the stage so tremendous in its sustained *crescendo* swell, and crushng force of utterance, as his defiance of the Council in that play. His voice surged and roared like the angry sea lashed into fury by a storm, till, as it reached its boiling, seething climax, in which the serpent hiss of hate was heard at intervals amidst its louder, deeper, hoarser tones, it was like the Falls of Niagara, in its

tremendous down-sweeping cadence: it was a whirlwind, a tornado, a cataract of illimitable rage.

GEORGE VANDENHOFF: 'Leaves from an Actor's Note Book,' *chap.* 12, *pp.* 200–1, 1842.

The acting of Forrest was natural, impulsive, and ardent, because he was not so well trained as his English rivals in what may be termed a false refinement. . . . . Forrest was not considered as polished an actor as Macready, and was often charged with rudeness and violence in his impersonations, and even ridiculed for muscularity of manner: and yet I never knew a tragedian who did not use all his physical power in reaching the climax of his most impassioned delineations. It must be remembered that Mr. Forrest was a strong man, and when excited his passions appeared more extreme than those of one more delicately organized; and unqualified condemnation was only heard from those who were either unable or unwilling to perceive that the traits which distinguished our then young actor were really more natural than the elaborate presentations and precise mannerisms of Macready. Hence the *people* loved Forrest and followed him, while those who claimed to be the *élite* admired and applauded Macready, who came endorsed by a metropolis which in those days, in matters of art, assumed the direction of American judgment. . . . . Although Forrest in his youth had only received what was then called a good school training, he furnished in his manhood an example of what might have been profitably imitated by the young men of his time who, with all of the advantages of collegiate education, failed to exhibit the progressive intellectual improve-

ment which steadily marked his course from year to year. Many who did not admire his earlier dramatic performances were greatly impressed with his manner in the later parts of his career, his impersonation of *Lear* being generally considered the crowning point of his excellence. Mr. Longfellow, who did not admire Mr. Forrest in 'Jack Cade' or the 'Gladiator,' speaking of his *Lear*, said it was a noble performance, well worthy the admiration of the lovers of good acting.

JAMES E. MURDOCH: 'The Stage,' *chap.* 15, *pp.* 295–6.

It was at my desk he perused the letter refusing the nomination of the Democratic party of the City of New York to run for Member of Congress. When I asked him why the honor conferred upon his profession, by his election, was not sufficient inducement to run the hazard of the die, the reply was characteristic of the man—"I want no further honor, and can't afford to give my time for eight dollars a day, when I can make two hundred out of it. The day may come when I shall make the game of politics my study; and then it will be time enough to present myself to the suffrages of my fellow-countrymen."

F. C. WEMYSS: 'Twenty-six Years of the Life of an Actor,' *p.* 324.

However much Macready moves one at a time by the subtle intellect of his personification, I never am much the better for it afterwards—never find a word, a look, an attitude written on my heart. There are certain points of Mr. Forrest's playing that I shall never

forget to my dying day. There is a force, without violence, in his passionate parts, which he owes much to his physical conformation ; but which, thrown into the body of an infirm old king (his *Lear* was very kingly), is most awful and withering ; as, for instance, where he slides down upon his knees, with—

> For, as I am a man, I think this lady
> To be my child, *Cordelia.*

HENRY F. CHORLEY : 'Memoirs,' *vol. i., chap.* 4.

Of the actors whom I have seen, Salvini not excepted, Forrest alone possessed a physique such as one conceives to have been moulded expressly for the assumption of heroic *rôles.* His figure, though its bulk would certainly have seemed excessive in these days, when even the athlete is fain to submit himself to the restrictive code of æstheticism, was symmetrically proportioned, and suggestive not only of perfect health and herculean strength, but of a certain kind of grandeur. His countenance was very handsome, and capable of taking on a rich glow. His voice was so powerful and clear that its lightest tones fell upon the distant ear as if there were no intervening space, and, when unrestrained, it had the fulness and mellowness that belong only to the finest organs. It would have seemed ridiculous that he should be cast for any parts except the greatest : the other actors, even those who were taller, looked insignificant beside him, and their voices, when strongest, seemed thin, and, if I may so apply the word, juiceless, in the comparison.

JOHN FOSTER KIRK, in *Lippincott's Magazine,* June, 1884.

Mr. Forrest has one great merit. If he sometimes tears "a passion to tatters" he never allows it to "come tardy off," and the spectator is interested however much he may find to censure. As John Philip Kemble said of Edmund Kean, he is "terribly in earnest." In Roman characters his lofty and dignified bearing cannot but challenge admiration, and in his delineation of the noble virtues of *Damon* and *Brutus*, his contempt for tyranny and oppression seems but the echo of his own individual feelings. The friends of Forrest have already blended with his name many of the virtues of his Roman characters, and we are inclined to the opinion that he is not undeserving of them.

'The Actor,' *chap.* 9, *pp.* 84–5.

What especially I find to admire in Mr. Forrest is his power to move me. He has great faults; he rants undoubtedly; he roars and bellows at times in the most unpleasant manner; he conceives some parts very differently from my idea of them; and I never see him without disapproving of many things that he does. But I never see him without confessing his ability. He possesses the true dramatic talent—the power to make you weep and shudder at his will. *He himself feels what he represents.*

Adam Badeau: 'The Vagabond,' Edwin Forrest.

But the first actor who made a profound and lasting impression upon me was Edwin Forrest. Had this man learnt his art in an old country, amid cultured surroundings, had he enjoyed the advantages of acting only before refined and intellectual audiences, a means

of education of inestimable value, he would have gone down to posterity on a footing with Garrick, Mrs. Siddons, Talma, and Edmund Kean. But the audiences he attracted were not the most refined, and their wild enthusiasm only confirmed in him faults which sometimes dimmed, but were powerless to quench the lustre of his genius. Physically, he was endowed beyond any actor I have ever seen. He might have stood to a sculptor as a model for Hercules. His form was massive, but beautifully proportioned. His Roman head was well set upon a neck like the trunk of a tree. His face expressed the perfection of manly strength of mind, and harmonized well with the power of his limbs, and lastly his voice was in perfect keeping with the rest of his physique. In volume, resonance, melody, and compass, it was phenomenal, while its power of endurance was such, that no amount of ill-usuage seemed to affect its purity. I have seen him play two tragedy parts in one night, and to the last his tones were clear as a bell. Add to these qualities the fact that he was endowed with dramatic genius of equal fibre, and you will ask, "What then did he lack?" He lacked the high polish of art. . . . . .

Amusing stories were told of the abuse of his great physical strength, from which his brother actors occasionally suffered. For instance, when *Lucullus* tells his master *Damon*, that, by killing his horse, he has prevented *Damon* from returning in time, to save the life of *Pythias*, who has remained with *Dionysius* as hostage for his friend, Forrest, after a terrible scream, waited for the Gods to execute his prayer upon *Lucullus*, then springing upon him with the words, "I'll tear thee into pieces," proceeded to carry out his threat as

nearly as the law would allow. He lifted him from the ground, dashed him down, mopped the stage with him, and dragging him off the stage, left him to recover as best he might. Some one seeing the pale and trembling fellow gasping for breath, and bleeding, asked him what was the matter. *Lucullus* stammered out, with a piteous pride in the honor of the thing, "I have been playing with Forrest." "Indeed," returned the other, "by the look of you I should have thought that Forrest had been playing with you."

Forrest, however, could be intense without violence, as he proved in 'Theresa; or, The Orphan of Geneva,' in which, as *Carwin*, he was never loud till the last speech, and yet contrived to fascinate his audience by his Satanic wickedness. On the other hand, his "Curse your Senate," as *Pierre*, in 'Venice Preserved,' was like the explosion of a bombshell, that made the audience fairly jump from their seats. From such an actor little could be learnt. His merits were born with him, and could not be imitated. Those who have tried to model themselves upon him have ruined their own voices without acquiring his, and generally have shared the fate of the frog in the fable, who tried to swell himself out to the size of the ox.

HERMAN VEZIN, in the *Dramatic Review*, Feb. 22, 1885.

Forrest had extraordinary physical advantages, and though he failed to make them properly responsive to the calls of deep or wild emotion (had he succeeded in this, his rightful eminence would have been as little disputed as was that of Talma or Mrs. Siddons), he displayed them intelligently, and with a very pleasing

effect in many scenes and passages of a less exacting nature. He acted best when he acted least,—when he was content to let his fine face, his imposing figure, and the full, pure tones of his unforced voice exert their natural charm. There were speeches with a tincture of poetry or sentiment—in the 'Lady of Lyons,' for example—which flowed from his lips like a strain of simple melody. There are lines in 'Othello' which seem to demand such a voice as his more than any other gift. One of them is—

> Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them,

in which, though he left the delicate irony unexpressed, the calm, deep sound seemed to suspend the clashing weapons by some inherent irresistible sway. Another is—

> Silence that dreadful bell, it frights the isle
> From her propriety?

of which the utterance was itself bell-like, but without harshness or clangor. In the last act,

> It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul!

if not equally impressive, is recalled to my memory in strong contrast with the delivery of "'Twas I that did it?" with the exaggerated emphasis on the first word and the exaggerated prolongation of the second, accompanied by a vigorous thumping on the breast, like some barbarian chief boasting of his warlike exploits.

John Foster Kirk, in *Lippincott's Magazine*, June, 1884.

Old Mr. Burke, the father of the youthful dramatic and musical prodigy so popular half a century ago,

when he heard of Mr. Forrest as a distinguished performer, said, "Does he draw big houses?" and being told that he did, he exclaimed "Thus, by the powers! he's a great actor!"

JAMES E. MURDOCH: 'The Stage,' *chap.* 15, *p.* 297, *foot note.*

Forney tells a good story about a visit which he paid with Forrest to Henry Clay, soon after the passage of the compromise measure. The colonel unguardedly complimented a speech made by Senator Soulé, which made Mr. Clay's eyes flash, and he proceeded to criticise him very severely, ending by saying, "He is nothing but an actor, sir,—a mere actor!" Then, suddenly recollecting the presence of the tragedian, he dropped his tone, and turning towards Mr. Forrest said, with a graceful gesture, "I mean, my dear sir, a mere French actor!" The visitors soon afterward took their leave, and as they descended the stairs Forrest turned towards Forney and said, "Mr. Clay has proved by the skill with which he can change his manner, and the grace with which he can make an apology, that he is a better actor than Soulé."

Atlantic Monthly, May, 1881.

The unfortunate being who chanced to cut him out of a scene, as the theatrical phrase has it, would, during the remainder of the great man's engagement, find his life a burden. Mr. Gilbert is not alone in believing that Forrest was not only a truly wonderful actor, but a bully and a coward. It is a matter of record that on one occasion, in the Tremont Theatre, he tormented a little fellow one-third his size almost to madness,

but when the young man at last turned upon him with a Roman's sword from "the property-room," swearing to take his life, he fled to his dressing-room in the wildest alarm, and did not come out again until the danger, if there was any, was passed.

Upon another occasion, while Mr. Gilbert was stage manager of the Tremont Theatre, one of the stock company, a sensitive young man, during a rehearsal, became so frightened and confused by Forrest's bullying directions and abuse that he forgot his lines. When the rehearsal was over Forrest went to Mr. Gilbert and complained bitterly of the young man; asked why in the name of hades he could not have better support.

"Mr. Smith knows his part well, and can play it well," replied Gilbert coolly.

"Knows his part, Sir; knows his part! Damn it, Sir, he can't remember a line of it," thundered Forrest.

"You frightened it out of his head."

"I frighten him? How, Sir, how?"

"By abusing and badgering him," answered Gilbert, his blood getting warmer. "If you had not interfered with him there would have been no trouble. Let him alone and he will play the part to-night as well as it can be played." This proved to be the case, and from that time forward Mr. Forrest had no more complaints to make to Stage-manager Gilbert.

In money matters, the great actor is said to have been close and grasping to a degree which thoroughly disgusted the warm-hearted, open-handed men and women who were his associates on the stage. At the end of one short engagement at the Tremont Theatre

his share of the receipts amounted to $4,000; and though the managers lost by their contract with him, and for the moment were unable to pay the stock company, he exacted the prompt payment of the last penny which was his due. The money was handed over to him, a few odd dollars being in rolls of twenty-five cent pieces, and he left the box-office. Half an hour afterward he returned with one of these rolls, and, taking a piece of silver from it, said to the treasurer, in his own peculiarly pompous manner, "This quarter, Sir, which you have given me, is not good."

"What's the matter with it?" asked the treasurer, curtly.

"It has worn smooth, Sir, and the people at the bank refuse to take it. You must give me another for it."

The treasurer, who was a good deal of a wag, handed Mr. Forrest a bright new quarter, took the worn piece, and, with the words, "I wouldn't sell these two shillings for five dollars," slipped it into his pocket. That night the story of Forrest and the smooth quarter was known all over Boston.

HOWARD CARROLL: 'Twelve Famous Americans.' John Gilbert.

It is told that Forrest, the tragedian, coming among the list of stars, Phillips was assigned the part of *Horatio*, in 'Hamlet.' At rehearsal, during the first act, a difficulty arose from Phillips being unable to give the emphasis Forrest wished conveyed to *Horatio's* line, "I warrant it will." The progress of the rehearsal was interrupted, and many times

the following dialogue repeated, without producing the desired effect:

> *Hamlet.*—"I will watch to-night,
> Perchance 'twill walk again."
> *Horatio.*—"I warrant it will."

"No, no, no," roared Forrest; "deliver it in this way, Mr., Mr., Mr.—Phillips." Forrest repeated the instruction a dozen times. Finally, Phillips, looking at the stage-manager with a very serious countenance, remarked, "My salary is eight dollars per week, and—" Forrest, enraged, interrupted him, exclaiming, "Sir, we are not here to discuss salaries; can you or can you not speak that line in this way?" Then, giving the line with the required force and expression, he paused and glared at Phillips, who very coolly and deliberately answered, "No, sir; if I could deliver it in that way, my salary would be five hundred dollars per night." The humor of the remark was too much for Forrest's gravity even. With a characteristic grunt, (such as only Forrest could utter,) the tragedian walked to the "prompt table" and, with a smile, said to to the manager, "Let Mr. Phillips' salary be doubled at my expense during my engagement." Night came, and poor Phillips, elated with good fortune, and over-anxious to please Forrest, ruined everything.

> "I will watch to-night,"

said *Hamlet*,

> "Perchance 'twill walk again,"

quickly replied *Horatio*, taking the sentence out of *Hamlet's* mouth. Forrest with difficulty restrained his passion, and when he came off the stage, fuming

with rage, roared, "I will give one hundred dollars per week for life to any one who will kill Mr. Phillips."

JOHN S. CLARKE: 'Era Almanack,' 1874, *p.* 69.

On one occasion, Mr. Edwin Forrest, the American tragedian, then a young man, and more famous for his muscle than his genius, gave a most tremendous display of really powerful acting. He was supposed to represent a Roman warrior, and to be attacked by six minions of a detested tyrant. At the rehearsals, Mr. Forrest found a great deal of fault with the supers who condescended to play the minions. They were too tame. They didn't lay hold of him. They didn't go in as if it were a real fight. Mr. Forrest stormed and threatened; the supers sulked and consulted. At length the captain of the supers inquired, in his local slang, "Yer want this to be a bully fight, eh!" "I do," replied Mr. Forrest. "All right," rejoined the captain, and the rehearsal quietly proceeded. In the evening the little theatre was crowded, and Mr. Forrest was enthusiastically received. When the fighting scene occurred, the great tragedian took the centre of the stage, and the six minions entered rapidly and deployed in skirmishing order. At the cue, "Seize him!" one minion assumed a pugilistic attitude and struck a blow straight from the shoulder upon the prominent nose of the Roman hero; another raised him about six inches from the stage by a well-directed kick, and others made ready to rush in for a decided tussle. For a moment Mr. Forrest stood astounded, his broad chest heaving with rage, his great eyes flashing with

fire, his legs planted like columns upon the stage. Then came a few minutes of powerful acting, at the end of which one super was found sticking head foremost in a bass-drum in the orchestra, four were having their wounds dressed in the greenroom, and one, finding himself in the flies, rushed out upon the roof of the theatre and shouted "Fire!" at the top of his voice; while Mr. Forrest, called before the curtain, bowed his thanks pantingly to the applauding audience, who looked upon the whole affair as part of the piece, and "had never seen Forrest act so splendidly."

STEPHEN FISKE: 'Era Almanack,' 1873, *p.* 57.

In one of his later traveling experiences Forrest reached a small town where the stage appliances were beneath contempt, and where this theory of his might find a test. His manager feared to tell him how meagre were the scenes which must represent Elsinore; but as night approached he was forced, of course, to speak. He had hung two American flags at the stage openings, and these represented drop curtains as well as palace, platform, chamber and castle. Instead of anger and annoyance, Forrest only smiled as he saw these preparations, and he declared that nothing could be better. He would show the audience that 'Hamlet' could be played in that foreign frame with none of its powers shorn or weakened, while his own patriotism would stimulate his energies, as his eyes rested on the banners of his native land.

LAWRENCE BARRETT: 'Life of Forrest,' Prologue, *p.* 6.

It will no longer be possible for any one to think of the actor as a burly ruffian, whose legs and lungs were more powerful than his brain. Mr. Alger shows him to us as a lover of his art, a student of Shakspere, a man with a tender heart and an open purse. At the age of twenty-one he was able to command a salary of two hundred dollars a night. Ignorant, conceited, and successful, he educated himself; he worked hard at his profession; he traveled and studied; he neglected no opportunity of self-improvement. As an actor, he aimed at the best; his execution, always direct, became at last more and more refined; the boy at nineteen had dared to play *King Lear;* at sixty there was but little lacking in the awful picture the man then presented of that majestic ruin. Side by side with his good points his biographer shows the bad—his pride, his prejudice, his profanity, his brooking of no contradiction, his brooding over an insult or an injury. In his career there was something characteristically American, and even in the man himself Mr. Alger sees something typical of his nationality: "If occasionally in some things he practised the American vice—self-will, unconscious bigotry entrenched in a shedding conceit—he prevailingly exemplified the American virtue: tolerance, frankness, generosity."

BRANDER MATTHEWS, in the *Nation*, April, 23, 1877.

Edwin Forrest is a grate acter. I thot I saw *Otheller* before me all the time he was actin'; and when the curtin fell I found my spectacles was still mistened with salt-water which had run from my eyes while poor *Desdemony* was a-dyin'. Betsy Jane, Betsy

Jane! let us pray that our domestic bliss may never be busted by a *Iago.* Edwin Forrest makes money actin' out on the stage. He gits five hundred dollars a nite, and his board and washin'. I wish I had such a Forrest in my Garding!

ARTEMUS WARD; 'His Book, Edwin Forrest as *Othello.*'

SAMUEL PHELPS.

1804–1878.

Honest and hearty, howso curt and gruff,
None knew but to respect the sterling soul,
To learn that deep down in his gnarlèd stuff
Lay a soft core beneath the rugged bole.
Farewell to him, and honor to his work,
Done years ago, but not yet passed away;
Whose growths in unexpected places lurk,
To bless and cheer, to solace and to stay.

TOM TAYLOR.

SAMUEL PHELPS.*

Samuel Phelps was the last, and by no means the least, not only of a generation, but of a dynasty of actors,—the Shaksperean dynasty,—founded by Burbage, and stretching in an unbroken line from Betterton downwards. For two hundred years the stage was at no time without its two or three "legitimate" actors,—men who had been trained in the classic drama, who could move with ease and dignity through the whole poetic repertory; to whom the march of sonorous iambics was as little of a mystery as the modulations of the hexameter to the ancient rhapsodists. These familiars of the "grave cothurnate muse" were often excellent comedians as well, but their comedy was always of the heroic order. Only a few, like the universal Garrick, were low comedians, or even "character actors." Amid all their differences of method, the members of this dynasty passed on from generation to generation a great tradition and a great repertory. They all owned the same ideal; they all worked, in great measure, upon the same material. The race survives in America, like many another good old English

* I desire to express my great obligation to Mr. W. May Phelps, nephew of Samuel Phelps, who has kindly placed at my disposal much of the material collected by him for his forthcoming biography of his uncle.—W. A.

stock, in the person of Mr. Edwin Booth. Phelps, its last English scion, though he lived to see Mr. Irving almost in the plenitude of his power, would probably have been more at home with Burt and Mohun at the Cockpit than on the Lyceum stage. Betterton, Booth, Quin, Garrick, Kemble, Macready, Phelps,—so run the representative names, the last linked to the first by an unbroken chain of tradition. Phelps trod the stage in the buskin of Burbage; but to whom has he bequeathed it?

Samuel Phelps was born at Devonport, February, 13, 1804.* He was educated at the Classical School, Saltash, and began life as a proof-reader on a Plymouth newspaper. His participation in private theatricals led to domestic difficulties, and at the age of seventeen he ran away from home, arriving in London, May, 1821. He found employment as reader on the staff of the *Globe*, and afterwards on the *Sun*, making the acquaintance of Douglas Jerrold, who was then engaged as a compositor in the *Globe* office. He soon became a leading spirit in a company of amateur actors, but did not take to the regular stage until five years later. In 1826 he married (in London) a young lady named Miss Sarah Cooper, and a month or two afterwards joined the company which worked the York circuit. His provincial career was chequered and laborious. Some account of it will be found in the 'Memoir' written by Mr. John Coleman, who does not, however, pretend to accuracy of detail, and who attributes to Mr. Phelps a slangy vulgarity of language quite foreign to

* It was not his father, as generally stated, but his eldest brother who was a wine merchant. His father, at the time of his birth, was in business as a naval outfitter in Plymouth.—W. A.

his habit. In 1831, at some theatre in the north of England, he played *Wilford* to the *Sir Edward Mortimer* of Edmund Kean, who warmly praised and encouraged him. Under the management of Watkins Burroughs and Ryder he spent some time in Ireland, and in the Scotch provincial towns, acquiring in the latter the accent which he afterwards used with such effect in *Sir Pertinax MacSycophant.* He did not emerge from obscurity until October, 1836, when he appeared at Exeter with great applause. His fame soon reached London, and in the following year we find Macready and Benjamin Webster competing for his services, the former going down to Southampton for the special purpose, it would seem, of seeing and engaging him ('Diary,' Aug. 14, 1837). He made his first appearance in London at the Haymarket under Webster's management on Aug. 28, 1837, playing *Shylock* to the *Portia* of Miss Huddart (Mrs. Warner). He was favorably received, and appeared twelve times in all before the close of his engagement on Oct. 7, his parts being *Sir Edward Mortimer*, *Hamlet*, *Othello* and *Richard III.* On Oct. 27, of the same year, he joined Macready at Covent Garden, appearing as *Jaffier* to the manager's *Pierre.* There seems to be no doubt that his success alarmed the timorous Macready, who, recording in his diary (Aug. 29) the success of Phelps's appearance at the Haymarket, confesses that he "starts at every shadow of an actor." During the two seasons of his management he subordinated the new-comer not only to himself but to Anderson, Vandenhoff and Elton, in a way which Phelps keenly resented. Nevertheless, chances of distinction were not wanting. During the first season

Phelps played *Othello* to Macready's *Iago*, *Macduff* to his *Macbeth* (frequently), *Cassius* to his *Brutus*, *Dumont* to his *Hastings* (in 'Jane Shore'), and *Adrastus* to his *Ion*. Phelps was excluded, however, from the cast of 'Romeo and Juliet,' 'Coriolanus,' 'Lear,' the 'Two Foscari,' and the 'Lady of Lyons,' which was the great success of the season. In the following season (1838–9) Phelps played *Tullus Aufidius*, *Posthumus*, *Antonio* ('Tempest'), *Marcus* ('Cato'), the *Constable of France* ('Henry V.'), and the *First Lord* (!) in 'As You Like It.' He also created the part of *Joseph* in 'Richelieu.' In the autumn of 1839 he supported Macready at the Haymarket, playing *Iago*, *Othello*, *Jacques*, *Antonio* ('Merchant of Venice'), *Master Walter* and *Beauséant*, and creating the part of *Onslow* in Bulwer's 'Sea-Captain.' From January to March, 1840, he appeared with Macready at Drury Lane, under the abortive management of W. J. Hammond, playing *Macduff*, *Darnley* ('Mary Stuart'), and *Rolla*. He returned to the Haymarket in March, 1840, and remained a member of the company until July, 1841, though the great success of 'Money' kept him idle for several months. The chief additions to his list of parts were the *Ghost* in 'Hamlet' (which he played both to Macready and Charles Kean), *Henry VI.* in Cibber's 'Richard III,' *Steinfort* (in the 'Stranger'), *Gabor* ('Werner'), *Major Oakley*, *Old Dornton*, *Joseph Surface*, *Falkland* and *Baradas*. In August and September, 1841, he appeared at the Lyceum in the title part of Mr. G. Stephens's 'Martinuzzi', and in the following winter he rejoined Macready at Drury Lane. During the two seasons of 1841–2 and 1842–3, he stood upon very cordial terms with his

manager, and was within an ace of accompanying him on his American tour in 1843. Among his new parts during these two seasons may be mentioned the *Duke of Milan* ('Two Gentlemen of Verona'), *Hubert* ('King John'—a great success), *Adam* ('As You Like It'), *Bellarius* ('Cymbeline'), *Leonato* ('Much Ado'), *Gascoyne* ('Henry IV.,' Pt. 2.), On February 11, 1843, he created the part of *Thorold* in Browning's 'Blot in the 'Scutcheon,' which ran for only three nights. In the autumn of 1843 Henry Wallack made an abortive attempt at management, opening Covent Garden with the announcement that Phelps, Anderson and Vandenhoff would appear in 'Othello,' 'Julius Cæsar,' 'King John,' and 'Macbeth,' playing in rotation the parts of *Othello*, *Iago* and *Cassio; Brutus Cassius* and *Antony; John Faulconbridge* and *Hubert; Macbeth*, *Macduff*, *Banquo.* Only three of these performances were given: two of 'Othello,' and one of 'Julius Cæsar,' the theatre being shortly afterwards given over to a company of French children.

"Bulwer's Act" of 1843 had in the meantime abolished the monopoly of the patent theatres and established free trade in the drama. Phelps was prompt to take advantage of this change. In conjunction with Mrs. Warner and Mr. T. L. Greenwood he took Sadler's Wells Theatre, a playhouse of no very lofty associations, frequented by the lowest and roughest suburban audiences, and situated within a few hundred yards of that classic tavern, the Angel, at Islington. The new management cleaned and renovated the interior, and opened their campaign on Monday, May 27, 1844, with 'Macbeth,' Phelps and Mrs. Warner, of course, playing the *Thane* and his *Lady.* Their

difficulties were at first enormous. Not only had they to educate the minds of their public, but to chasten its manners and moderate its language. Little by little Sadler's Wells, with its two-shilling boxes, shilling pit and sixpenny gallery became as decorous as any West-End theatre of to-day, and far more appreciative of the beauties and subtleties of poetic drama. The untiring energy of Phelps, not only as actor but as stage-manager, enabled him to present worthily during the eighteen years of this heroic enterprise (for so it deserves to be called) almost all the masterpieces of our classic drama. Of the thirty-seven plays attributed to Shakspere, he produced all but six, namely the three parts of 'Henry VI,' 'Titus Andronicus,' 'Troilus and Cressida,' and 'Richard II.' The number of Shaksperean performances amounted in all to four thousand, 'Hamlet' alone being played more than four hundred times. Not only Shakspere but the other great Elizabethans found a place in the Sadler's Wells repertory; not only the Elizabethans but the comedy writers of the Eighteenth century from Congreve to Colman; not only the classics but the moderns—Bulwer Lytton with the 'Lady of Lyons' and 'Richelieu,' Browning with the 'Blot in the 'Scutcheon,' Tom Taylor with the 'Fool's Revenge,' and many others.* Professor Henry Morley, the historiographer of this memorable management, describes in his 'Journal of a London Playgoer' the marvelous intelligence and adroitness with which Phelps utilized the limited means at his command in playing on the stage such difficult plays 'A Midsummer

* He produced at least two plays by American authors—John Howard Payne's 'Brutus' and G. H. Boker's 'Calaynos.'—W. A.

Night's Dream,' 'Timon of Athens' and 'Pericles'—the last, by the way, one of his greatest successes. In his suburban corner he maintained a successful rivalry with Charles Kean at the Princess's, not, indeed, in the splendor, but in the appropriateness of his stage-settings, while there can be little doubt that he was more careful than his fashionable competitor to give his productions their due literary value. A fair amount of pecuniary success attended this management, but it by no means enriched the partners. Greenwood retired in April, 1860, and Phelps himself in March, 1862, though he played a farewell engagement under his successor in the following autumn and did not take his final leave of his Islington audiences until Nov. 6, his last part being *Brutus* in 'Julius Cæsar.'

After leaving Sadler's Wells, Phelps became a wanderer in the theatrical world. He appeared for several seasons under the management of Mr. F. B. Chatterton at Drury Lane and the Princess's, playing in addition to his chief Shaksperean characters, such parts as *Manfred*, *Mephistopheles*, *Marino Faliero*, and the leading characters in Halliday's adaptations of Scott. In 1870 he appeared at the Queen's Theatre, under the management of Mr. Labouchere, as *Bottom* and *Prospero*. Under Mr. Hollingshead's management he made frequent appearances at the Gaiety from 1873 onwards, in conjunction with Charles James Mathews, J. L. Toole, Herman Vezin, Lionel Brough, Arthur Cecil, Mrs. John Wood, etc. Here he played *Cantwell* (in the 'Hypocrite'), *Job Thornberry* ('John Bull'), *Sir Pertinax MacSycophant*, *Sir Peter Teazle*, *Falstaff* ('Merry Wives'), *Bottom*, *Jacques*, *Lord Ogleby*,

Richelieu, *Shylock*, etc. His last performances took place at the Aquarium (Imperial) Theatre in 1878, where he was announced to appear on alternate afternoons as *Richelieu* and as *Wolsey*. It was in the latter part that his final break-down occurred, Feb. 27, 1878. He spoke his great speech up to the words,

> "Cromwell, Cromwell,
> Had I but served my God"—

at which point he tottered and almost fell into the arms of Mr. Norman Forbes (*Cromwell*), by whom he was led off the stage, never to return to it. He died at Anson's Farm, Coopersale, near Epping, Essex, Nov. 6, 1878.

Phelps was undoubtedly one of the best "all round" actors the English stage has known. He does not stand in the front rank with Betterton, Garrick, and Kean, but he takes an honorable place in the second line with such actors as Quin, Macklin, Kemble, Young, and Macready. A fine forehead, a strong and well-cut nose, a wide and flexible mouth, and well-marked and mobile eyebrows would have constituted a perfect actor's face had it not been marred by the narrow and rather colorless eyes. His physique was suited rather for character parts than for the strictly heroic. He played *Hamlet* when he was in his sixty-ninth year,—at the Princess's, in November, 1872,—but he played *Romeo* for the last time at Liverpool shortly before he opened Sadler's Wells, contenting himself afterwards with *Mercutio*. "Good tragedian as he is," says Professor Morley, "it is in a sort of comedy, vaguely to be defined as dry and intellectual, but in his hands always most

diverting, that Mr. Phelps finds the bent of his genius as an actor to be the most favored." Among his best parts of this order were *Malvolio*, *Bottom*, *Shallow*, *Armado*, *Parolles*. His *Falstaff*, though full of intellectual humor, was, in wine-bibber's slang (the aptest for the occasion), deficient in "fruity" richness. On the other hand, it is doubtful whether a better *Shylock* or *Sir Pertinax* has been seen since Macklin. He was "great," says Tom Taylor, "in parts like *Old Dornton* and *Job Thornberry;*" and the same critic bears a strong testimony to his versatility when he says, "If ever actor satisfied author, Phelps satisfied me in *Bertuccio*." Among his chief mannerisms was an undue slowness of delivery; but this habit, if we may believe Professor Morley, was acquired at Sadler's Wells, "when he was training a rude audience to the enjoyment of dramatic poetry, and endeavored to assure life in slow minds to every word." It was thus, so to speak, an honorable scar gained in the great battle of his life.

In private life Phelps was a man of strict probity and great natural kindliness, though his manner was not always of the most suave. His wife, to whom he was greatly devoted, died in 1867, and out of a family of three sons and three daughters, one son and two daughters survived him. He was to the last an enthusiastic brother of the angle, and spent the greater part of his hours of relaxation on the banks of the river Darent, near Farningham, Kent.

WILLIAM ARCHER.

"Who is the young man who played *Tubal* to-night?" inquired Edmund Kean, after playing *Shylock* at a theatre in the north at this time. "Samuel Phelps, sir." "Please send him to me." The young actor, fearing that he had made some terrible blunders, proceeded to the tragedian's dressing room. "Mr. Phelps," said the great tragedian, clapping him on the shoulder, "you have played *Tubal* very, *very* well; persevere and you'll make a name."

The *Theatre*, December, 1878.

Mr. Phelps represented the *Prince* [in 'Pericles'], sinking gradually under the successive blows of fate, with an unostentatious truthfulness; but in that one scene which calls forth all the strength of the artist, the recognition of *Marina* and the sudden lifting of the *Prince's* bruised and fallen spirit to an ecstacy of joy, there was an opportunity for one of the most effective displays of the power of an actor that the stage, as it now is, affords. With immense energy, yet with a true feeling for the pathos of the situation that had the most genuine effect, Mr. Phelps achieved in this passage a triumph marked by plaudit after plaudit. They do not applaud rant at Sadler's Wells. The scene was presented truly by the actor, and fully felt by his audience.

HENRY MORLEY: 'Journal of a London Playgoer', Oct. 21, 1854.

. . . . . Mr. Phelps has of late been the promoter of about thirty of the characters of Shakspere. Great men or small, heroes or cowards, sages or simpletons, sensual or spiritual men, he has taken all as characters

that Shakspere painted, studied them minutely, and embodied each in what he thinks to be a true Shaksperean form. *Bottom the Weaver*, *Brutus*, *Falstaff*, *Macbeth*, *Christopher Sly*, are characters assumed by the same man, not to display some special power in the actor, but the range of power in the poet to whose illustration he devotes himself. Good tragedian as he is, I suppose that it is in a sort of comedy, vaguely to be defined as dry and intellectual, but in his hands always most diverting, that Mr. Phelps finds the bent of his genius as an actor to be the most favored. Thus in *Malvolio* he would appear to have a part pretty exactly suited to his humor, none the less so because there is perhaps no character in which he is himself lost sight of so completely; substance vanishes, and shadow lives. . . . . Other *Malvolios*, seen by the playgoers of this generation, have been more fantastical, and caused more laughter—although this one causes much—but the impression made by them has been less deep. Few who have seen, or may see, at Sadler's Wells the Spanish-looking steward of *Countess Olivia*, and laughed at the rise and fall of his *château en Espagne*, will forget him speedily. Like a quaint portrait, in which there are master strokes, his figure may dwell in the mind for years.

Ibid., Dec. 13, 1856.

Mr. Phelps undertook to create a classic theatre at Sadler's Wells, where previously there had been nothing but clowning and spectacle. He found the place in the barbarous condition to which such a training of taste might naturally lead. Not only did it seem preposterous to suppose that the

Clerkenwell and Islington audiences would ever be brought to take a remunerative interest in the best plays and playing, but the vilest uproars, the grossest disorders used to occur in the building nightly, so that it is an early tradition of Mr. Phelps's lesseeship that he had actually to throw a cloak over his theatrical dress and rush up into the gallery in order to secure something like decorum and quiet. But he stuck to his text, and that text was for the most part the text of Shakspere. He found some of the best of our actors willing to aid him, he trained others. He did not suffer the roughness of the audience to tempt him with mean or slip-shod productions. He tried upon them the effect of fine scenery, picturesque decorations, grand effects, but all subordinated loyally to noble acting, to just elocution, to original and powerful conceptions and interpretations of the greatest works. You may know how surely, and comparatively speaking, how rapidly he triumphed—how scarcely a great play of Shakspere, or indeed any great author, was omitted from his unprecedented list of classical revivals,—how the same gallery, which at first roared itself hoarse while the play went on in dumb-show, became hushed in rapt admiration ; how between the acts the theatre became one humming æsthetic debating party in which points of acting and interpretation were debated with the keenest interest ; how its fame spread on the wings of the press throughout the whole world of English speech ; and how, in fact, it became by force of mere popular success, a classical national theatre, more truly than any that was ever established by means of royal patronage or imperial subventions. Mr. Phelps has much to be proud of in

the artistic creations of his histrionic power, and scarcely less in his great historic encouragement, secured forever by his faith and patience to all who labor in the same cause.

HENRY IRVING : 'Address at the Perry Bar Institute,' March 6, 1878.

When the play ['Fool's Revenge'] was produced on Oct. 18, 1857, after three weeks of patient and laborious rehearsal, more than equivalent to twice as much time less well employed, the good result was apparent in a smooth, level, and satisfactory performance, with no stage hitch in scenery, speech, or movement, in which nothing had been left to chance, nothing sacrificed to carelessness. Phelps himself was admirable in the part of *Bertuccio*, which in the earlier scenes perfectly suited his sardonic and saturnine manner, while in the interview with his daughter it gave scope for that deep and yearning affection beneath the hardness and harshness which made the actor so great in parts like *Old Dornton* and *Job Thornberry*, to my mind beyond question his masterpieces ; while in the third act it afforded an opportunity, of which Phelps availed himself with immense effect, of presenting the cross-currents of many moods and motives,—exulting malignancy, snake-like insinuation, anticipated triumph, gratified revenge, passing through many phases of doubt and bewilderment, and culminating in the horrible conviction that *Bertuccio* has compassed his own child's abduction and dishonor, — perhaps death. I have never seen acting more intense than in his desperate attempts to wear the jester's mask, in the hope that

it may secure him access to the pavilion in which his daughter is shut up at the mercy of the ruthless *Duke*, and in danger besides of the poison of the jealous *Duchess*. If ever actor satisfied author, Phelps satisfied me in *Bertuccio*. I have always thought it his most powerful impersonation, though from the great strain it put upon him it soon became too much for his strength, and when I last saw him in the part I was sensible of a great falling off. . . . . When I look back on what I then saw of Phelps's management in action, the enormous labor of his rehearsals, the conscientious thoroughness of his acting, and his abandonment to the passion of his part, his devotion every day and all day long to the labors of his art and the cares of his theatre, I feel I can understand better than those who knew his work only in its finished results, as it came before the public eye, what an enormous amount of Phelps's best life must have been put into the eighteen years of his management of Sadler's Wells. Knowing how much of mental as well as bodily strain those eighteen years' work must have cost him, I feel how wretchedly inadequate must have been his reward, either in money made, reputation won, or credit and honor given, had it not been for the other and incalculably higher rewards derived from love of art, sense of duty fulfilled, and that consciousness of good work done which is all the sweeter the harder are the conditions of the doing. I have not time or space here to say what I should like to say of the good work done by Phelps at Sadler's Wells. To my mind he stands out as one of the most potent and profitable among the unrecognized and unrewarded civilizers and educators of his

time. He brought a noble and admirable form of the art which, above all art, combines all the elements that appeal to the popular imagination within reach of a local public, which had, before his time, seen that art only in its most debased and coarsest forms; to say nothing of that larger public which, during the eighteen years between 1844 and 1862, found in Sadler's Wells stronger and better served stage food for the eye and mind than they could find in any of the more aristocratic quarters of the town, or any of the more pretentious homes of the drama, during the same period.

Tom Taylor, in the *Theatre*, December, 1878.

Broad, rugged power was perhaps his most striking attribute. Versatile he was, too, but versatility is not a quality that produces the highest works of art. *Timon of Athens*, *Sir Pertinax*, *Werner*, *Wolsey*, *King Lear*, *Bertuccio* were amongst his finest impersonations. His exceptional physical strength enabled him to give full effect to the strongly passionate scenes, while the sympathetic tones of his deep voice told with touching pathos in such scenes as the one between *Bertuccio* and his daughter. That the upper tones of his voice were sometimes nasal and throaty may be attributed to the fact that the newly-discovered science of voice production was not known in his day. Had it been so, be sure he would have studied it, for, as he told me, "For twenty years I never rested in my study of everything that had any bearing on my art."

Lacking, tho' he did, the veneer of polished society which so often masks insinscerity and selfishness, he

always exhibited the kindly feelings of a true gentleman of nature to the members of his company.

When I was blundering through the words of *Orlando* at the first rehearsal, he said to me in a kindly undertone, "I don't know what you intend doing with this part, but"—and then followed a modestly delivered and clear exposition of the meaning of the part. On my *début* I saw him during my first scene standing at the wing in his shirt sleeves, his face half made up for *Jacques*, evidently taking stock of his new "juvenile leading man." Later in the evening he came up to me behind the scenes and grunted in my ear, "You'll do!" No elaborate compliment could have been so gratifying. All through the season, and, indeed, whenever I met him in other theatres, it was always the same. If he was compelled to cast me a part which he knew I did not like, it was, "I am very sorry, but I am afraid I must ask you to play so and so. I can't help myself;" begging as a favor, what he had the right to demand as a duty.

HERMAN VEZIN, in the *Dramatic Review*, June 6, 1885.

But I must say that I was never so conscious of this unfairness with him [Macready] as with his very inadequate successor, Mr. Phelps, who always took his stand about two feet behind you, so that no face should be seen, and no voice be distinctly heard by the audience but his own. I remember finding this particularly unpleasant on the night I played *Lady Macbeth*, at the first performance given in honor of the Princess Royal's marriage. These performances took place at Her Majesty's Theatre, in the Haymarket, soon afterwards burned down. The stage

was the largest in London, and fully one-third of it was occupied by the proscenium. I was there, as was my choice after my marriage, acting very rarely and at long intervals. From want of continuous practice, therefore, I was not so sure of the penetrating power of my voice, especially in a theatre of such unusual size. At one of the rehearsals kind Sir Julius Benedict warned me against speaking further back than the proscenium. He said no voice, however powerful, could be heard behind it, and that the singers invariably planted themselves in front. I mentioned this to Mr. Phelps, who was the *Macbeth*, and he seemed to agree to act upon the suggestion. But at night, from his first entry, he took a position far behind me, and kept it, whenever possible, throughout all my scenes with him. In my subsequent experience with him, I found this was his invariable practice. Tricks of this sort are as foolish as they are ungenerous, and could never enter the minds of those who desire to be real artists. When actors have told me, as they often have, that I was always so fair to act with, I could only express my surprise, for how can you hope to represent characters truly upon the stage unless mind is acting upon mind, and face meeting face, so that the words appear to flow in answer to the thoughts you see depicted there.

HELEN FAUCIT (Lady Martin): 'On Some of Shakspere's Female Characters,' *pp.* 293–4.

At Sadler's Wells Theatre, one evening during Mr. Phelps's management, the house was very full and very noisy, and there was every appearance of the performance going off in dumb-show. Just before

the time for the curtain to go up there were loud cries from the gallery of "Phelps, Phelps." After a little delay the green baize was drawn back, and Mr. Phelps, dressed for his part, came forward. Advancing to the footlights, with folded arms and looking up to the gallery very firmly, he called out, "What is it you want?" "Too full, too full," shouted a dozen voices. "Well," said Mr. Phelps, "why don't some of you go out?" This seemed to take the gods by surprise, for there was no response. The idea of going out never seemed to have entered their heads, in fact it put one in mind of the old story of belling the cat; with who's to do it was the problem to be solved. Mr. Phelps retired; the curtain went up, and no more was heard of "too full."

Era Almanack, 1879, *p.* 116.

The leading actors of the company were too well practised in elocution and action to require, or it may be to accept, their leader's tuition; but of the rank and file it may be justly said that they owed everything to his tuition. For them no less than for their audiences the stage of Sadler's Wells was truly a School of Dramatic Art, of which Phelps was the accomplished master. At the rehearsals, invariably conducted by himself, his efforts were unceasing, not merely with the minor actors, but even with the mute supernumeraries. Tolerant of everything but inefficiency, not once only, but twenty times in succession, would he put those showing incompetency through their gestures or their words. If the histrionic power were in them, Phelps would draw it out; if it were not, he would drive it in. Surely no stage manager

ever labored with more steadfast zeal to make the very best of his material. And he found his reward in the recognition by the public of the perfect artistic confederacy of his company, disciplined, like Milton's angels, "from shadowy types to truth." The unity of purpose thus attained being complete, individual merits, however high, became, as they should in any picture, whether on the stage or canvas, merged in the general effect. As a consequence, the symmetrical balance and sense of artistic proportion were so well kept, that on quitting the theatre the spectator, without exactly knowing wherefore, found himself invariably calling to mind the play as a whole, and not any particular scene or person in it.

RICHARD LEE, in the *Theatre*, September, 1886.

In 'Henry V.,' in the march past before Agincourt, the troops defiled behind a "set-piece" which rose breast high. Mme. Tussaud modelled eighty wax heads, — these were fitted on "dummy" figures of wicker-work, clad in the costume and armor of the period. Every man of the gallant forty carried two of these figures, one on either side, attached to a sort of framework, which was lashed to his waist; hence it seemed as if they were marching three abreast. As they tramped past, banners streaming, drums beating, trumpets braying, the stage seemed crowded with soldiers, and the illusion was so perfect that the audience never once discovered the artifice.

JOHN COLEMAN: 'Memoirs of Samuel Phelps,' *p.* 217.

When Mr. Toole went to America in 1874, and I

had the Amphitheatre in Holborn and the Opera Comique in the Strand under my direction, in addition to the Gaiety, I was enabled to offer Mr. Phelps a night engagement at the Gaiety. We produced the 'Merry Wives of Windsor' at Christmas, 1874, with scenery by Mr. Grieve, and original music by Mr. Arthur Sullivan. Mr. Phelps played *Falstaff*, and associated with him in the cast were Mr. Hermann Vezin, Mr. Arthur Cecil, Mr. Righton, Mr. J. G. Taylor, Mr. Belford (one of his old Sadler's Wells company), Mr. Forbes Robertson, Miss Furtado, Miss Rose Leclercq, and Mrs. John Wood. Probably the most pleasant member of the company was Mr. Phelps. He had an amiable faculty of "making himself at home." When he first joined the regular Gaiety company—a company not generally associated with the so-called "legitimate drama"—he behaved as if he had been amongst them all his life; and with the company mentioned above—some of them specially engaged for the 'Merry Wives of Windsor'—he was soon on the very best of terms. Instead of sitting in state in his dressing-room, he passed much of his time in the greenroom, and entered into all the little amusements of the place in the most pleasant manner. Fines were instituted to punish those who were found tripping in the text of Shakspere, and once or twice Mr. Phelps was caught (on evidence probably not very trustworthy), but he paid his fines cheerfully. The money was ultimately spent in a bowl of punch.

John Hollingshead, in the *Theatre*, December, 1878.

CHARLES KEAN.

1811—1868.

MRS. CHARLES KEAN.

(ELLEN TREE.)

1805—1880.

ELLEN TREE.

'Tis Nature's witchery attracts the smile ;
'Tis her soft sorrows that our tears beguile ;
Nature to thee her fairest gifts imparts ;
She bids thee fascinate, to win all hearts—
The wife, the queen, the wayward child we see,
And fair perfection, all abide in thee.

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.

CHARLES KEAN.—ELLEN TREE.

The son of his father, as Macready called Charles John Kean, was a native of Waterford, Ireland, the town that is said to have given birth to Dorothy Jordan. He was born, while his parents were members of the company there, on January 18, 1811, the elder Kean, playing *Richard III.* and *Harlequin* in the miserable provincial theatre, with domestic surroundings as wretched as the scenes of his nightly labors, endeavored during the day to support his wife and children by giving lessons in boxing and fencing to the neighboring gentry, and with very little hope then of professional distinction, or home comfort. The better times came, however ; London recognized, and what was more to the purpose, paid the actor ; and in 1824 we find Charles, after studying in excellent preparatory schools, an Oppidan at Eton. Here he remained three years, devoting much of his time to athletics, and having among his associates such men as Mr. Gladstone, Spencer Walpole, and others equally well known to the world. During this period the boy's future was not determined, but his was to be an aristocratic trade, as was befitting the schoolfellow of a Duke of Newcastle, a Marquis of Waterford, and lords galore. His father wanted to see him in the Navy, his mother in the Church, while his

own predilection was for a soldier's uniform, and the commission of the First Gentleman in Europe to carry a sword. But before he was ready to face the world his father had squandered his fortune, thrown his wife and his son aside, and Charles to protect a mother broken in health and in spirit, and poor in purse, resolved to follow his father's profession, against that father's express command. He made his first appearance at Drury Lane, on the first day of October, 1827, as *Young Norval;* and in view of his subsequent association with the American stage it was a strange coincidence that his first manager should have been Stephen Price, the American lessee of the Park Theatre, New York, and that in the cast of the play should have been found the name of J. W. Wallack (as *Glenalvon*), both so intimately connected with the history of the drama in the United States. The critics were cruelly severe upon the new actor, recognizing nothing that was good or even promising in his performances; and they almost broke the heart of the mother, and the spirit of the son by their forebodings of his certain failure in the profession. Charles Kean, however, felt that he was a mortal who had that within him which would command success, and deserve it too, and during that season he came again and again to the charge, playing *Selim* in 'Barbarrosa;' *Frederick* in 'Lovers' Vows;' and *Lothair* in "Monk" Lewis's 'Adelgitha,' with Mrs. Duff, the subsequent American favorite, in the titular part.

He was kindly received by Dublin audiences, when he made his first bow before them, as *Young Norval*, April 20, 1828. He subsequently went to Scotland, where he became reconciled with his father, and for the

first time the Elder and the Younger Kean were seen together on the stage at Glasgow, Oct. 1, 1828, the first anniversary of the son's *début* in London. The play was Payne's 'Brutus,' and the interest in the performance was very great. Mr. Cole, the biographer of Charles Kean, and his official herald, relates evidently on the authority of Charles himself, that when *Brutus* exclaims, in a burst of agony, "Embrace thy wretched father," and falls on the neck of *Titus*, the applause was so great that "the wretched father" had time to whisper in the son's ear, "Charley, we are doing the trick!" The Keans were seen together occasionally in provincial towns and in the same pieces during the following year or two; but Charles, emboldened by practice and success, resolved to try again his fortune in the metropolis, and this time in a higher range of characters, playing *Romeo* at Drury Lane on Dec. 22, 1828. On Boxing-night in the play of 'Lovers' Vows' for the first time he uttered Lover's Vows on the stage to Miss Ellen Tree. After playing with more or less success in London and the provinces, and even at Amsterdam and the Hague, Kean resolved, in the autumn of 1830, to try his fortunes in the New World, where his father on two visits had established fame for the name, and where it was hoped the son would be cordially welcomed; and on Sept. 1, at the Park Theatre, New York, he made his bow to his American cousins as *Richard III.* His tour in the States continuing for nearly two years and a half, was gratifying to him in many ways, and he felt that it was no small triumph for a youth of twenty, to establish a reputation as *Romeo*, *Sir Edward Mortimer*, *Sir Giles Overreach*, *Hamlet*, and *Richard*

III., with audiences that had known Booth, Cooper, Cooke, and the elder Kean himself. On his return to his own country his reception was neither enthusiastic nor decidedly cold; he was engaged at Covent Garden for thirty pounds a week, but by no means was he regarded as highly as by the theatre-goers of the other side of the ocean. The elder Kean was engaged by the same management, and on March 25, 1833, for the first and only time they were seen together on the London boards, Edmund Kean attempting *Othello*, his son playing *Iago*, and Miss Ellen Tree *Desdemona*. The elder Kean never appeared upon any stage again.

For eight or nine years after his father's death Kean worked hard and conscientiously at his profession, gaining in power and popularity in his own country, as well as in America. In 1838 he commanded a salary of fifty pounds a night at the Haymarket; and in 1839 he made another successful visit to the United States. On Jan. 29, 1842, after playing in the 'Honeymoon' at Dublin with Miss Ellen Tree, he was privately married to that lady, taking the most important and fortunate step in his life. They appeared on the bills as Mr. and Mrs. Kean for the first time at Glasgow on Feb. 27, and on April 4, in the same year, they were at the Haymarket, as double stars, shining jointly in 'As You Like It,' the 'Lady of Lyons,' the 'Gamester,' and Knowles's 'Rose of Arragon.'

In 1845 Mr. Kean made his third, Mrs. Kean her second, visit to America, opening at the Park Theatre, New York, Sept. 2, as the 'Gamester.' During this engagement Mr. Kean was seen for the first time in

the United States as *Jacques*, *Benedick*, *Don Felix*, the *Duke Aranza*, and *Alfred Evelyn*. They were very successful throughout the Union, and returned to England in the spring of 1847. In 1848 he was selected by Her Majesty to conduct the Christmas theatricals at Windsor Castle; a duty he performed for the next ten years. In 1850, Kean, for the first time, became a manager; and at the Princess's Theatre, in Oxford Street, found himself in his proper element, and with the opportunity to revive the legitimate drama he had so long desired. Between the years 1852 and 1859 the tragedies and comedies of Shakspere were put upon the stage in as perfect and thorough a manner as art and wealth and learning and taste could devise. The 'Merry Wives of Windsor' (Nov. 22, 1852) was followed by 'King John' (Feb. 9, 1853), 'Macbeth,' 'Richard III.,' 'Henry VIII.,' 'Winter's Tale,' 'Midsummer Night's Dream (Oct. 15, 1856), 'Richard II.' (March 12, 1857), the 'Tempest,' 'King Lear' (April 17, 1858), the 'Merchant of Venice' (June 12, 1858), 'Much Ado About Nothing' (Nov. 19, 1858), and 'Henry V.' (March 28, 1859). Between these were seen, presented in a style of equal magnificence and correctness of detail and scenery, the 'Corsican Brothers,' 'Sardanapalus,' 'Faust and Marguerite,' 'Louis XI.,' 'Pizarro,' and many more. During these seasons the Keans had surrounded themselves with a good company, particularly strong in young, clever and pretty women, including Kate and Ellen Terry, Agnes Robertson (Mrs. Dion Boucicault), Carlotta and Rose Leclerq, and Caroline Heath (Mrs. Wilson Barrett), many of whom they introduced to the stage and all of whom

profitted by their instruction and example. Mr. Kean retired from management on July 20, 1859, and virtually then closed his connection with the London stage. He had lived his life and realized his dream. He had elevated his craft and had reaped his reward in the approbation of the intellectual and refined of his countrymen.

In July, 1863, the Keans started on their final tour, to extend around the globe. They went first to Australia, then from California to the Atlantic States, and back to England in 1866. His last appearance in America was made at the Broadway Theatre (corner of Broome Street), New York, April 16, 1866, as *Louis XI.* and *Mr. Oakley;* his last appearance on any stage was as *Louis XI.*, May 29, 1867, at the Prince of Wales's Theatre in Liverpool. He died in London, Jan. 22, 1868.

While many of the playgoers of the present, who remember Charles Kean at all, remember him only in his later years, as *Lear*, *Louis XI.* or *Wolsey*, the old man, broken and ready almost to lay his weary bones among us, he was ranked by certain of his contemporaries as only one degree below the few, very few, men of absolute genius who have appeared upon the English speaking stage ; and by some of his enthusiastic admirers he was even believed to equal the elder Kean himself and the giants who had gone before. As an actor laboring under the disadvantages of a small, insignificant person, a voice unmusical and harsh in sound, and sometimes entirely unmanageable, he won for himself, if not the highest place in his profession, one, at least, that was honorable and lasting. Men who saw both of the Keans upon the

stage, and who acted with them, have accused Charles of being an imitator of his father, not only in action, but in the striking peculiarites of his articulation. His vocal mannerisms were marked and not always pleasant, and a bronchial trouble of long standing made him an easy prey to the caricaturists and the wits. His performance of *Jacques* was thus summed up and dismissed in a public journal by a clever paraphrase of lines in 'As You Like It' itself: "How *does* this Charles?" "He cannot speak, my lord." "*Take* him away!!" And *Punch*, dwelling upon his inherent difficulties with his m's and his n's, acknowledged his antiquarian researches into the habits of Shakspere's Jew, and thanked him for having proved *Shylock* a vegetarian by his reading of the following lines:

> You take my house when you do take the prop
> That doth sustain my house; you take my life
> When you do take the *beans* whereby I live.

The son of his father, however, was certainly more than his father's son, and he owed very little to his sire either in a personal or a professional way. As a parent the elder Kean was not admirable; and as an actor he was so great that the younger, suffering from a comparison which he did not invite and could not avoid, was always overweighted by his name and lineage. He would have been a remarkable man if he had been the son of a Nokes, or Stokes, or Jones, or Robinson; and had not been handicapped by the title that will always cling to him—that of the Younger Kean. In moral worth Charles Kean, a blameless, upright, honorable man, was infinitely his father's superior; and as theatrical manager and restorer, and upholder of what

was legitimate and deserving upon the stage, he merits unqualified praise.

Ellen Tree, the daughter of a contemporary of Charles Lamb in the East India House, was born in London in 1805, and belonged to a family honorably conspicuous on the English stage in the early part of the present century. Her eldest sister, Mrs. Quin, was a celebrated dancer; another sister, Maria Tree (Mrs Bradshaw), was a great favorite as an actress and vocalist, creating among other parts, *Clari*, and singing for the first time in public Payne's 'Home, Sweet Home;" while a third sister, Ann Tree (Mrs. Chapman), in a more humble but not less reputable line, was popular in London and the provinces as a "singing chambermaid" and *soubrette* for many years. Ellen Tree, according to Cole's 'Life of Charles Kean,' made her *début* in Edinburgh when she was barely eighteen years of age, and on Sept. 23, 1826, made her first London appearance at Drury Lane as *Donna Volante* in the 'Wonder.' This was followed at the same house by *Letitia Hardy*, *Albina Mandeville* in the 'Will,' *Rosalie Somers* in 'Town and Country,' *Charlotte* in the 'Hypocrite,' *Miss Hardcastle*, and *Christina* in the 'Youthful Queen.' In 1829 she went to Covent Garden where she assumed her first tragic rôle, *Francoise de Foix* in Fanny Kemble's 'Francis the First,' and later, for her own benefit, she played *Romeo* to Miss Kemble's *Juliet*.

In 1832, when the 'Hunchback' was first produced in Dublin, Miss Tree played *Julia* to the *Master Walter* of Knowles himself; and so much to the author's satisfaction that he wrote for her the part of

Mariana in the 'Wife,' presented at Covent Garden, April, 24, 1833, with Knowles as *Julian St. Pierre*, and Charles Kean as *Leonardo*. On the original representation of Talfourd's 'Ion,' Covent Garden, May, 26, 1836, she played *Clemanthe* to Mr. Macready's *Ion*, but assumed the titular part at the Haymarket in August in the same year, making it one of her most popular characters. Mr. Macready did not admire her *Ion*, but when she carried it to America the next season, Sargeant Talfourd wrote thus of the lady who illustrated the hero and made the story of his sufferings familiar to transatlantic audiences:—"Who is there who does not feel proud of the just appreciation, by the great American people, of one who is not only the exquisite representative of a range of delightful characters, but of all that is most graceful and refined in English womanhood, or fail to cherish a wish for her fame and happiness, as if she were a particular friend or relation of his own."

Ellen Tree made her American *début* as *Paulina* in the 'Ransom,' and as *Rosalind*, Dec. 12, 1836. Her tour lasted nearly three years; she played in every important theatre in the country, and carried home with her £12,000 in cash, and the affection and esteem of the American people as was predicted by the author of 'Ion.'

In 1842 Ellen Tree became Mrs. Charles Kean, and from that time until her retirement from the stage in 1868, on the death or her husband, her professional life was part of his, and in these pages is so recorded. She died in London, Aug. 21, 1880. As Mrs. Charles Kean she was honored and respected as woman and actress, and is to-day remembered;

but as Ellen Tree she will live in dramatic annals: the successor of Mrs. Siddons and Miss O'Neill, the contemporary of Miss Fanny Kemble and of Miss Helen Faucit, and the precursor of Miss Ellen Terry.

LAURENCE HUTTON.

We must here retrace our steps a little, and recall a circumstance that happened previously to Kean's second expedition to America.—One night when the boy Charles had been exhibiting before his mother, and stirring up her maternal pride by the merits of his acting, Kean suddenly returned home. His brow was very moody. He had been playing *Richard*, and had come home in part of the Crookback's dress. The "trunks" were still on him, the wig, and part of the paint: the rest had been rubbed off with a rough towel. He rang the bell, called for brandy and water, and threw himself at full length on the sofa. To soothe the angry spirit, and to excite a little admiration, perhaps, for the boy, Mrs. Kean said: "Do you know that Charles can act? and, really, very well." "*Indeed!*" was the tragedian's answer:—the tone was a little sarcastic. "Yes," returned the mother, "he can: and you shall see him." And, accordingly, Charles began. His acting was, we are told, very clever; but it did not provoke a word from his father. *He* continued to lie on the sofa: he looked at the boy,—listened,—and, when all was over, said: "There—that will do very well. Go along! Good-night! It is time to go to bed. No more—a—*acting*, Charles."

When the boy had retired, Kean broke out:—"That boy will be an actor if he tries; and if he *should*,"

added he with an emphasis, "I'll cut his throat!" Mrs. Kean interfered—remonstrated—talked of other things—and tried different methods of allaying his agitation. The tragedian, however, continued drinking his brandy and water—glass after glass—stronger and stronger. He muttered—he swore—"The name of Kean shall die with *me*. It shall be buried in my coffin."

BARRY CORNWALL: 'Life of Edmund Kean,' *chap.* 19.

Unlike his father he is never careless; he anxiously elaborates every scene to the utmost of his power, never throwing a chance away, never failing except from lack of means. He is not only a respectable and respected member of his profession; he has the real artist's love of his art, and pride in it, and he always does his best. Laughed at, ridiculed and hissed, and for many years terribly handled by critics, both in public and private, he has worked steadily, resolutely, improvingly till his brave perseverance has finally conquered an eminent position. He began by being a very bad actor; he has ended by forcing even such of his critics as have least sympathy with him to admit that in certain parts he is without a rival on the stage. . . . . I must confess that it has never been an intellectual treat to me to see Charles Kean play Shakspere's tragic heroes, but I doubt whether his great father could have surpassed him in certain melodramatic parts. . . . . In the lighter scenes of the first two acts of the 'Corsican Brothers' he wanted the graceful ease of Fechter; but in the more serious scenes, and throughout the third act, he surpassed the Frenchman with all the weight and intensity of a

tragic actor in situations for which the comedian is unsuited. The deadly quiet of a strong nature, nerved to a catastrophe—the sombre, fatal, pitiless expression—could not have been more forcibly given than by Charles Kean in this act; and in the duel there was a stealthy intensity in every look and movement which gave a shuddering fascination to the scenes altogether missed by Fechter. . . . . It is because there is no presence of poetry in his acting that we feel Charles Kean to be essentially a melodramatic actor. The unreality and unideality of a melodrama are alike suited to his means. If he attempt to portray real emotion, he leaves us cold; if he attempt to indicate a subtle truth, it is done so clumsily and so completely from the outside conventional view that we are distressed. He has no sympathy with what is heroic. He wants nicety of observation, and expression for what is real.

GEORGE HENRY LEWES: 'On Actors and the Art of Acting,' *chap.* 2.

Charles Kean's *Hamlet* has many beauties, but he is physically disqualified to do justice to any character in tragedy. His conception is slow, and though generally correct, his execution will not second it. Nature has given him a most unmelodious voice, the sound of which appears to flow rather through his nose than its appropriate organ; a face altogether unsuited to the character he attempts, and we doubt if she ever intended him for an actor.

The 'Actor,' *chap.* 6, *p.* 69.

Highly as I admired much of Kean's work in the

greatest Shaksperean characters, I liked him best in parts of a somewhat lower grade. In the former he leapt up at an ideal which was beyond his grasp and failed to clutch it by an inch or two. Still one saw and respected the noble effort and was grateful to him for not dragging Shakspere down to his own level. But in such parts as *Beverley*, the *Stranger*, *Adrastus*, etc., as well as in his comedy characters, *Don Felix*, *Benedick*, *Mr. Oakley*, the effort which destroys effect was not perceptible. He entirely topped such parts and left a feeling of perfect satisfaction. So, too, in characters which he studied with the ripe experience of middle age, he discarded, to a great extent, the too persistent regard for external display, which marred to the last the great parts he had studied in his youth. His first entrance in *Hamlet* was marked with a firmness and determination in bearing and walk, which would have suited a young warrior just entering the lists; and he stood in a bold, upright attitude, his arms folded and his handsome eyes turned *up* (so long that the position must have been very painful) in utter disregard of his mother's words,

> Do not for ever, with thy veiled lids,
> Seek for thy noble father in the dust.

The whole action was picturesque, spirited, and graceful, but utterly unlike *Hamlet*.

So in *Shylock*, the great scene in Act III. was acted with intense passion, but with a youthful vivacity and grace of movement which might have suited *Richard III.*, but were out of character with an old money-lending Jew. It is astonishing that while his

performances of his early parts gained in finish, he should have stuck to these blemishes; while in his later characters, such as *Mr. Ford*, *King John*, the *Corsican Brothers*, *Louis XI.*, etc., he discarded them in favor of a much truer style of art.

From 1850, the year I went on the stage, I had the privilege of a personal intimacy with Kean, which was equally pleasant and profitable. I was a frequent visitor at his house in Torrington Square, which was always open to me. "I am at home to nobody but Vezin," he used to say, and he appeared to take almost as great delight in chatting to me about actors and acting as I had in listening to him. Naturally he never tired of telling me about his father. But few actors are now living who can remember that great man, but in those days I met many who had acted with him, and who all spoke of him with the wildest enthusiasm. From his son, however, I received the most graphic and vivid description of Edmund Kean's wonderful genius. It was said of Charles Kean that he considered himself a greater actor than his father. No accusation could be more absolutely false. "There are no Keans nowadays. I mean *Edmund* Keans," he said to me once; and in comparing his own *Othello* to his father's, he told me that a gentleman called upon him once in Liverpool and said, "Mr. Kean, I am going to see your *Othello* to-night to compare it with your father's." "I never played *Othello* better than I did that night," Kean continued, "and the next day my critic called on me and said, 'Well, Mr. Kean, I was very much pleased with your performance last night, very much pleased indeed, but—you are not your

father!' 'I know that,' said I, 'but to what difference do you particularly refer?' 'Well, Mr. Kean, *your* pathos comes from *here*,' placing his hand upon his heart. 'Well,' said I, smiling, 'you could hardly pay me a greater compliment.' 'Ah,' said the visitor, 'but your father's came from *here*,' and he slapped the sole of his foot with his hand. And he was right."

HERMAN VEZIN, in the *Dramatic Review*, May 21, 1885.

Who can act *Benedick?* Charles Kean, a shrivelled old man of sixty, who looked no more like *Benedick* than a dried herring, gave us by sheer art the best *Benedick* of many a year.

'Some of Our Actors:' the *Galaxy*, February, 1868.

During a visit to Exeter a ludicrous incident occurred. He had a favorite Newfoundland dog, named Lion, who accompanied him everywhere, and usually remained in his dressing-room while he was on the stage. One evening, during 'Richard III.,' the door happened to be left open, and Lion heard the well-known voice in loud excitement. He trotted out and appeared at the wing just as *Richard* and *Richmond* were on the point of engaging in the last scene. Lion growled at his master's antagonist, exhibited his teeth, and rushed furiously forward, whereupon the terrified *Richmond*, deeming the odds too serious, fled from the field and was seen no more. Kean, being left without an antagonist, was obliged to fall and die unwounded. Lion bestrode his master in triumph, licking his face and barking vociferously, while the curtain fell amidst a roar of

laughter and applause. *Richard* was then unanimously summoned before the curtain, presented himself, made his bow, and retired. Loud calls continued for "the dog," but Lion, having finished his *unstudied rôle, declined a second appearance.*

John William Cole : 'Life of Charles Kean,' *vol. i., chap.* 13.

It is said that actors often forget themselves so as to lose entirely their own identity in the part they are assuming. I do not believe, however, that such abstraction is ever so complete as to prevent, at least, a mechanical observance of all the material parts of stage business. I remember, upon one occasion, when Mr. Charles Kean was acting *Hamlet* and I *Horatio*, he made a pause in the scene, and, although apparently deeply absorbed, said in a stage whisper, "Good Heavens, what noise is that?" I replied, in an undertone, "It is only the ticking of the greenroom clock." "Oh, dear, what a nuisance," he whispered, and proceeded with his part, the audience not seeming to have noticed the interruption or heard the side speeches. After some time, in the same scene, he again paused, and said in an irritable undertone, "Can't they stop that clock?" All this was done without any apparent interference with his feelings or expression.

James E. Murdoch : the 'Stage,' *chap.* 17, *p.* 350.

But there [in Phelps's theatre] was no pedantry, no idle ostentatious outlay, no insisting on archæological minutiæ for their own sake, none of the feeling which made Charles Kean, at the Princess's, call out to the

actor who was rehearsing *Edmund* in 'Lear,' when he gives *Edgar* his key, "Make more of the key, sir. Good God, you give it him as if it was a common room-door key! Let the audience see it, sir; make 'em feel it, sir; impress upon 'em that it is a key of the period!"

TOM TAYLOR, in the *Theatre*, December, 1878.

Went to the Haymarket to see 'Ion;' it was tiresome and sleepy to a degree; over at 10 o'clock. Miss Tree's performance of *Ion* is a pretty effort, and a very creditable woman's effort, but it is no more like a young man than a coat and waistcoat are. Vandenhoff was frequently very false and very tiresome; some things he did very well. The play was very drowsy, very unreal.

W. C. MACREADY: 'Diary,' August 8, 1836.

On her arrival in America [1836] the bloom of youth had somewhat worn off, and her beauty, of which many reports had reached us, proved to be that of intellect and expression—certainly not of feature—while a peculiar stoop in her shoulders and a projection of the neck at first impressed a beholder disagreeably. But the impression vanished when you heard her speak, and ere you knew it you were fascinated by her feminine delicacy of manner, her soft and witching tones, and the perfect gracefulness and true elegance of her deportment, and you felt the conviction that you not only saw before you a consummate actress, but a pure, true, amiable and womanly woman. . . . . With us her greatest success occurred in the comedies of Shakspere. In *Viola*, *Rosalind*, *Beatrice* and *Portia*

she was inimitably great. Of *Ion* she has been the sole truly successful representative. Her *Julia* and *Mariana* we have already alluded to, and though in them she had been preceded here by Fanny Kemble, she stood the test of comparison with honor to herself. In *Lady Macbeth* and *Constance* she was almost too gentle and womanly. The characters were somewhat divested of their majestic grandeur—the very sublimity of ambition, crime, sorrow and despair. Her physical power was not sufficient to fully carry out the generally received idea of those wonderful Shaksperean creations. She was not sufficiently the shrew in *Katherine*, nor the termagant in *Juliana;* but the subtle workings of jealousy in *Mrs. Oakley* were most perfectly developed; and if she lacked something of dash and brilliancy in the most sparkling scenes of *Lady Townley* and *Lady Teazle*, she more than made amends by her exquisite acting in those passages which proved that they were, after all, true women, and not mere breathless, soulless shells. The pathetic beauty of her *Ophelia* has not been surpassed, and her minor characters, *Christine of Sweden*, *Kate O'Brien*, *Clarisse*, *Pauline*, *Maritana*, and many others, were pronounced perfect.

JOSEPH N. IRELAND: 'Annals of the New York Stage,' *vol. ii., chap.* 11, *pp.* 183–4.

Some of the stars that appeared in 1837 were of considerable magnitude. My first experience was of one that shone with a mild and steady radiance which captivated all who came within its influence. Ellen Tree was a singularly charming actress. Her refined and ladylike bearing, her delicate conception of

character, and her exquisitely truthful representation of the parts she assumed gave her an immediate success. I recall with perfect distinctness the mobile and expressive face, the graceful figure and the perfection of acting that made her such a favorite. Her reputation as an actress on the London stage had preceded her. She had triumphed over adverse influences. . . . . She won all hearts and was pronounced the most delightful of women upon the stage. But, alas! Time will not stand still nor spare the fairest in his course. Eighteen years later, when she again visited this country, we, who remembered her as she had been, were suddenly disenchanted. Ellen Tree, then Mrs. Charles Kean, had lost her beauty and her charm. She was merely a portly, dull, second-rate actress.

H. W. DOMETT, in the *Boston Budget*, March 14, 1886.

"I have met," said a veteran poet in my hearing once, "a good many actors who could spell, some who could write, but very few who could read." A finished delivery is rare, indeed—that nice and accurate lodgment of emphasis, with the proper inflections, giving each word its due prominence and relation to every other. It illuminates the author and sets his meaning, as it were, on a hill; it renders even indifferent passages luminous, eloquent, and full of expression. Those who have heard Ellen Tree read "She never told her love," will know what I mean. . . . . Twenty years ago Mrs. Kean was a *Beatrice* worthy of the part, an actress of true gayety; and her merry rollicking laugh which used to set the house in a sympathetic roar, yet lingers delightfully in my ears. There is not an actress on our stage who can express the gayety of

Beatrice, or point *Beatrice's* wit. Where, again, is there a *Rosalind*, or a *Viola?* Whoever has seen Ellen Tree as *Rosalind* will echo this question with regret.

'Some of our Actors,' *Galaxy*, February, 1868.

If we were to select the two characters in which Miss Tree appeared to greatest advantage, before she glided into the more matronly line which she now fills, we should name *Rosalind* and *Viola*. Perhaps the latter was the most faultless performance on the modern stage. It presented one of the sweetest creations of Shakspere's fancy, embodied as exactly as if the accomplished representative had been foreseen by the imagination of the author. In figure, feature, expression and elegant propriety of costume, in the delicate humor of the lighter points and the exquisite pathos of the serious passages, the portrait was one in which the most exceptious caviller would have been taxed to discover a defective feature or suggest an improvement.

John William Cole: 'Life of Charles Kean,' *vol. i., chap.* 18, *p.* 333.

Miss Ellen Tree was an actress who did not impress her audiences violently in her favor at first, but gradually increased in their estimation, until finally having obtained a place in their hearts, there she remains in defiance of their better judgment. She must pardon me if I do not entertain so great an opinion of her as many of my contemporaries. . . . . I have never seen Miss Ellen Tree perform any part in the numerous range of characters she sustains that left such an impression upon my mind, as to make me desirous of

witnessing it a second time. She came to the United States heralded as the best actress on the English stage (yet strangely enough her great fame in England was acquired after, and not previous, to her first visit to America), which being tacitly admitted, no critic was ungallant enough to analyze her claim; besides her charming affability in private life turned the heads of half the editors, who bit the other half, and thus she triumphantly acquired golden opinions everywhere.

F. C. WEMYSS: 'Twenty-six Years of the Life of an Actor,' *vol. ii., chap.* 22.

A London critic has said that Ellen Tree knew pre-eminently how to express an emotion by a glance and a thought by an accent. Every one who recollects her peculiar style will recognize the truth of this criticism. Mr. Charles Kean was an actor of points; that is, he dashed through a speech in a careless, indifferent way until he came to a particular passage, which he would utter with startling effect. But Mrs. Kean, while making wonderful points, never slurred a line or neglected the slightest detail. The strength of her points lay in their unexpectedness, in the revelation of unthought-of meaning in the words, in the power which she possessed of concentrating a world of expression in an inflection or a tone. We have mentioned the effect of her "I don't believe it!" in *Mrs. Beverley.* There were scattered through her personation innumerable similar instances. Her "*Arthur, trust me,*" in the 'Wife's Secret,' was a magnificent burst, that for days vibrated in the ears of every sensitive person that heard it. No one could ever forget her "*Oh, what shall I do with my doublet and hose?*" when *Rosalind*

learns that *Orlando* is in the wood ; and her "*I am the man*," when as *Viola* she receives the ring sent by *Olivia*, was always received by her audiences with a burst of delight. Her readings were always exquisite. Those who heard her "She never told her love" are apt to say that no other actress ever delivered those famous lines as she did. She possessed that very rare thing on the stage, true gayety. As *Beatrice*, her merriment was the gladdest thing in the world. In one scene her merry laugh is heard before she enters, and so joyous is it that the whole house is in roars of laughter in very sympathy, before she utters a word.

It is a mistake, we think, to say, as we sometimes hear, that Ellen Tree possessed beauty. Her figure in her earlier days was very graceful ; but her features, although charming when animated, could never be called handsome. In later years she grew large, after the manner of Englishwomen, and when she last appeared in this country very much of the old charm was gone. It was impossible not to see the thorough artist, despite unfavorable conditions ; and in some parts, such as *Mrs. Oakley* in the 'Jealous Wife,' she retained all her old power.

The stage has been endowed with many charming actresses since Mrs. Kean withdrew from it, and we have recently had occasion to lament the untimely demise of Adelaide Neilson, the only artist that has of late years attempted some of the parts in which Ellen Tree was famous. Miss Neilson was not equal to her great predecessor, although very pleasing, principally because she had not the intellectual resources of Mrs. Kean. Miss Neilson, in whatever she *did*, was always better than in what she *said*. Ellen Tree was always

delightful in what she did, with a faculty of giving to her words a wealth of meaning that few persons supposed they possessed. Charlotte Cushman also had this faculty, and yet single words and phrases do not stand out in our memory in any of her personations as they do in Ellen Tree's.

It is a great satisfaction to be able to think of Ellen Tree as not only a great actress, but as a public woman whom the breath of scandal never touched. The cold and austere John Quincy Adams fell under the fascinations of her acting; and in a poem that he addressed to her he applied a line from 'As You Like It,' that the world now may rightly crown her with—

The fair, the chaste, the unexpressive she.

OLIVER B. BUNCE, in *Appleton's Journal*, October, 1880.

Ellen Tree has a great gift of this winning woman's softness. She was an elegant, graceful, delicate actress; refined, well studied; playful, lively, scarcastic in comedy: her *Rosalind*, *Mrs. Oakley*, *Lady Teazle*, *Beatrice* were all charming performances. In a certain line of tragedy, too, she displayed great concentration of passion, a subdued intensity, a suppressed fire, that seemed to burn her up, and gnaw her heart; as in the *Countess* in 'Love,' *Genevra* in the 'Legend of Florence,' and others; the woman spoke out in all of these. Her *Mrs. Haller* was the most naturally touching performance of that character which I ever witnessed.

GEORGE VANDENHOFF: 'Leaves from An Actor's Note Book,' *chap.* 3, *p.* 44.

The only occasion on which I ever acted *Juliet* to a

Romeo who looked the part, was once when Miss Ellen Tree sustained it. . . . . Miss Ellen Tree looked beautiful and not unmanly in the part; she was broad shouldered as well as tall, and her long limbs had the fine proportions of the huntress Diana; altogether she made a very "pretty fellow" as the saying was formerly, as all who saw her in her graceful performance of Talfourd's *Ion* will testify; but assumption of that character, which in its ideal classical purity is almost without sex, was less open to objection than that of the fighting young Veronese noble of the fourteenth century. She fenced very well, however, and acquitted herself quite manfully in her duel with *Tybalt;* the only hitch in the usual "business" of the part was between herself and me, and I do not believe that the public, for one night, were much aggrieved by the omission of the usual clap-trap performance of *Romeo's* picking *Juliet* up from her bier and rushing with her stiff and motionless in her death trance down to the footlights. This feat Miss Tree insisted upon attempting with me; and I as stoutly resisted all her entreaties to let her do so. I was a very slender looking girl, but very heavy for all that. Finding that all argument and remonstrance were unavailing, and that Miss Tree, though by no means other than a good friend and fellow-worker of mine, was bent upon performing this gymnastic feat, I said at last, "If you attempt to lift me, or carry me down the stage, I will kick and scream 'til you set me down," which ended the controversy. I do not know whether she believed me, but she did not venture upon the experiment.

Frances Ann Kemble: 'Recollections of a Girlhood,' *chap.* II, *pp.* 200–1.

Miss Tree was performing in the old Chestnut Street Theatre. The play for the night was the 'Gamester,' Miss Tree playing the devoted wife, *Mrs. Beverley*—one of those performances which few of her admirers can ever forget. Mr. Webb was playing *Stukely*, the villain, and in one of the most interesting scenes, in consequence of having taken too much sherry at dinner, he was somewhat oblivious of the language of the part. Miss Tree gave him, as it is termed, "the word" several times, which Webb took up with so much politeness and formality as to render the scene ridiculous considering the stern villainy of the character, and his hateful relation to *Mrs. Beverley.* Finally the audience became aware of the true state of the case, and as usual in spite of their respect for the lady, began to titter while some hissed. Miss Tree was compelled at last to walk up the stage and take a seat with her back to Mr. Webb. By this time Webb had begun to feel how matters stood, and, a thoroughly polite man under all circumstances, he was now overwhelmingly punctilious, and with assumed sobriety of tone, though hesitating in articulation, and rather unsteady in his walk, he approached the footlights with a low bow and said: "Ladies and gentlemen, I am anxious to remove from your minds an evident misunderstanding concerning the true situation of affairs existing on the stage. I see—indeed I feel—I may say very sensibly realize—the fact that you perceive that *somebody* here is intoxi—intoxica—that is, in plainer words drunk! Now ladies and gentlemen, allow me to say that justice compels me to assure you, for fear your impressions should lead you to erroneous conclusions—to assure you I say that whoever is guilty

of the unpardonable impropriety I have alluded to, on the honor of a gentleman believe me the offending party is *not* Miss Ellen Tree!"

James E. Murdoch: 'The Stage,' *chap.* 6, *pp.* 152–3.

Were I to live to the age of Methusaleh, I shall never forget the end of that play. As *Mrs. Beverley* was being led off the stage, she gave a piercing shriek, and precipitated herself on the body of her husband! Had a bombshell dropped into the pit, it could not have created greater excitement. Anson (so long at the Adelphi) was the prompter, and he dropped the curtain on the instant. When it fell, we gathered round Mrs. Kean, and raised her. She was in mad hysterics, and kept exclaiming—

"Oh! my Charley—my poor darling—you are not dead; say you are not dead!"

"Deuce a bit, my darling!" responded Kean.

"But tell me so—tell me so, Charley!"

"I *am* telling you so, Nelly; but, there, there—come and get dressed for *Violante*."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Mrs. Kean, immediately recovering herself. "It's wonderful I should have forgot about the 'Wonder.' Servant, ladies and gentlemen!"

And so, with a stately curtsey, she made her way to her dressing-room. Half-an-hour afterwards she was revelling in the humors of *Violante*, as if such a personage as *Mrs. Beverley* had never existed.

John Coleman, in the *Dramatic Review*, May 9, 1885.

E. L. DAVENPORT.

1816–1877.

While viewing each remembered scene, before my
gaze appears
Each famed depictor of *Sir Giles* for almost fifty
years ;
The elder Kean and mighty Booth have held all
hearts in thrall,
But without overreaching truth, you overreach them
all !

ANON.

EDWARD LOOMIS DAVENPORT.

No shattered life is here before us; no career strewn with the wrecks of stormy passion and of ill-spent days; no record of blighted hopes and of rash and careless errors; but one of earnest and truthful devotion to the art he loved, of warm-hearted sympathy for his kind, and, above all, of the deepest and tenderest affection for his cherished family, among whom he spent his brightest moments, and in whose society he realized how near to Heaven can be the delights of a truly happy home.

Edward Loomis Davenport was born in Boston in the year 1816. His father was the proprietor of an old-fashioned tavern on Ann, now known as South, Street, from whence, before the establishment of railroads, the stage-coaches used to start for New Hampshire and Maine. In his youth he was apprenticed to George Vinton, then the well-known baker and confectioner of Boston; but, disliking the employment, his articles were cancelled by mutual consent, and he entered the wholesale dry-goods house of I. M. Beebe & Co., of Hanover Street. While in this position the stage seems to have exercised its fascination upon him, and he joined the Booth Dramatic Association of amateurs, the performances

of the company being given in the attic over a baker's shop in Deacon Street. With increasing membership, and, perhaps, a more extended ambition, the association moved to a hall over a stable in Front Street, and from this place young Davenport, under the assumed name of Dey, made his most important start in life, by appearing upon the regular stage at Providence, R. I., in the character of *Parson Willdo*, in Massinger's play of 'A New Way to Pay Old Debts.' He was then in his twentieth year, and has been described by those who remember him at this early period as handsome and graceful in his person and remarkably quiet but earnest in his manner. The star of the occasion was the elder Booth, who treated the young novice in the most kindly manner, and, observing his extreme nervousness, placed his hand encouragingly upon his shoulder and told him to "have no fear." The horrors of stage fright appear to have vanished before the touch of the great actor, for during the brief engagement we find the neophyte appearing as *Montano* ('Othello'), *Duke of Albany* ('Lear'), and *Marcellus* ('Hamlet'). From Providence the company went to Newport, and it was here that a chance was afforded him which had a marked effect upon his future career. He played *William* in 'Black-Eyed Susan,' and, though the performance must have been a very crude one as compared with his later admirable representation, he received much praise for his ambitious effort, and, according to one of his biographers, it was the means of attaching him to the stock company of the Tremont Theatre in his native city, among whose members he was enrolled in 1837. Here he went through the

usual hard work of a young utility actor, and developed that remarkable versatility which afterwards became one of his strongest characteristics. His opening part at the Tremont was one of only a few lines, that of the *First Officer* in Mrs. Gore's comedy of 'King O'Neal,' written for the lamented Tyrone Power, but soon afterwards we find him cast for *M. Deschappelles* to the *Claude Melnotte* of Forrest, and the *Damas* of John Gilbert, the beautiful Mrs. Barrett being the *Pauline*. He also appeared in the walking gentleman and juvenile parts of the old comedies, and during his two seasons in the theatre he had the opportunity of playing with Booth, Ellen Tree, Forrest, Vandenhoff, and Murdoch. The Tremont, at the time of Davenport's connection with it, was under the able direction of Thomas Barry, who, to the close of his life, manifested the warmest interest in his protégé, and always spoke of him with the most respectful regard and affection. It may not be generally known that Mr. Davenport was possessed of an excellent tenor voice, and that he frequently sang between the pieces; the song in which he was the most popular being the 'Bay of Biscay,' occasionally varied by that "mine of misery and pathos 'Billy Barlow.'" In his musical studies he was greatly assisted by the well-known Tom Comer, and by Signor Ostinelli, who was leader of the orchestra of the theatre, and so great was his ability in this direction that during his subsequent starring tour with Mrs. Mowatt, when towns were visited in which there was no theatre, and the entertainment had to be given in halls and lecture rooms, his ballad singing was the great feature of the evening, his

'Sally in Our Alley,' 'All in the Downs,' etc., always receiving rapturous encores.

After two seasons in Boston, he became a member of the company of the Walnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia, and it was here that he commenced to play the more prominent parts of the drama, and gave the promise of his future excellence. In the *Dramatic Mirror* of Nov. 13, 1841, occurs the following notice of his performance of *Charles Courtly*. "The admirable acting of this gentleman in this and similar characters has raised him high in our estimation. He is easy and natural, has a perfect command of self, is never ambitious to shout and bellow, so as to call forth the plaudits of the pit,—he aims at nature, and seldom misses his mark. Throughout the comedy, the ease and grace of Mr. Davenport were admirably suited to the character he impersonated." He left Philadelphia in 1844, and made his first bow to a New York audience at the old Bowery Theatre, in the character of *Titus* to the *Brutus* of Thomas Hamblin. His engagement here was but a brief one, for on April 19, 1845, the night of his first benefit, the theatre was destroyed by fire. Davenport had written for this occasion a short sketch called 'In Everybody's Mess,' which however was never performed, the MS. having been burned with the other property of the theatre. We next find him playing his first star engagement at the Boston Museum, his opening part being *Duke Dorgan* in 'Presumptive Evidence.' After this he performed at Niblo's, and it was during this engagement that the negotiations were entered upon between Mrs. Mowatt and himself which led to his accompanying that lady during a long tour through the United

States and England. It has been stated that Mr. Davenport's first appearance with Mrs. Mowatt was at the Park Theatre, New York, in the character of *Romeo*, in September, 1846. This is an error. According to Mrs. Mowatt's 'Autobiography of an Actress,' she first appeared at the Park Theatre as *Pauline* in the 'Lady of Lyons,' in June, 1845, and it was at the close of her first year upon the stage that the subject of our present memoir became associated with Mrs. Mowatt. They opened at Buffalo, thence making the tour of the States, and it was upon Sept. 27, 1847, that Mr. Davenport made his bow at the Park, as *Armand* in Mrs. Mowatt's play of that name, winning new laurels by his spirited impersonation. Two months later he accompanied Mrs. Mowatt to England, opening as *Claude Melnotte* in the Theatre Royal, Manchester, and at the Princess Theatre, London, as *Sir Thomas Clifford*, on Jan. 5, 1848. It was during this year that Gustavus Vaughan Brooke had dashed like a comet upon the London stage, and toward its close, upon his return from a short starring tour in the provinces, a combination was formed at the Olympic Theatre between Davenport, Mrs. Mowatt and himself. The initial performance was a tragedy by Henry Spicer, entitled the 'Lords of Ellingham' in which Brooke appeared as *Laurency*, Davenport as *Latimer*, and Mrs. Mowatt as *Edith*. The journals of the day are full of praises of the acting of the play, and it ran for over thirty nights. During the season at the Olympic, the American artists received much polite attention from Mr. Macready, and it was probably from the opportunities then afforded him of witnessing Mr. Davenport's impersonations, that the

great actor was induced to suggest that the younger artist should become his support, when three years later, he took his farewell of the stage.

It is, however, somewhat singular that although Macready ever manifested great regard for Davenport both as an actor and a gentleman, he does not once allude to him in his 'Diary and Reminiscences,' the omission being the more remarkable, as many other of his associates are dwelt upon at considerable length. A season of over one hundred and twenty nights at the Theatre Royal, Marylebone, then under the direction of Mrs. Warner, followed that at the Olympic, and so great was its success, that a second engagement for a year was entered upon, which was again succeeded by another at the New Olympic, (the old theatre having been burned to the ground) in the winter of 1849–50. The season was a long one, and a great number of new plays were produced, Mr. Davenport originally performing eight or ten leading parts. In January, 1851, began the series of Macready farewell performances, in all of which our hero appeared with honor to himself, his impersonations of *Brutus*, *Iago*, *Icilius* and *Macduff* receiving special encomiums not only from the press, but from the highest literary minds of England. He afterwards played a brief engagement at the Haymarket with James H. Hackett, followed by others at Drury Lane, the Princess's, St. James's and Sadler's Wells, in all of which he was ably supported by his wife, formerly Miss Fanny Vining, and after seven years' residence in England, he sailed for America in August, 1854, appearing in September at the Broadway Theatre as *Othello*. For some years after this he was one of the most popular stars of his time,

playing the most wonderfully contrasted parts, from *Bill Sikes*, to *Hamlet*, from *Sir Lucius O'Trigger* to *Othello*. He unfortunately for himself too frequently essayed management, and a large portion of his hard earnings was often sacrificed to meet the losses entailed upon him by unpropitious ventures in this direction. He managed successively the American Theatre (formerly Burton's),the Howard Athenæum, the old Washington Theatre, and the Chestnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia As a manager he evinced taste of a high order, joined to a great amount of energy and liberality, and more than all, to a spirit of the deepest sympathy for those by whom he was surrounded, whose weaknesses he knew, whose talent and ambition he always strove to foster. The printed notice in each dressing room—"Boys, don't smoke, and if you love your manager, turn down the gas," is in every sense typical of the man, and his noble, generous nature lost no opportunity of asserting itself in behalf of those, who if they met him in an honest spirit, were ever the brothers and sisters of his heart. In 1862, he entered into the celebrated combination with James W. Wallack, Jr., during which the well-known drama of 'St. Marc' was produced, and his subsequent career was a series of triumphs culminating in the grand production of 'Julius Cæsar' at Booth's Theatre, in the winter of 1876, his *Brutus* being then, as it had been previously in London, the theme of universal praise. He paid a visit to California in 1868, and played a successful engagement at the Metropolitan Theatre there, returning to New York to add another success to his already long list, in the character of *Prospero* at the Grand Opera House. His last appearance

in New York was as *Edgar* in 'King Lear,' early in 1877. During the previous year he had added to his repertoire the part of *Daniel Druce*, and his power and honesty of purpose in this character will not easily be forgotten. It was in the rugged blacksmith that his last words upon the stage were spoken. He had long been a great sufferer from rheumatism, and a serious cold contracted during the spring of the year just named, added, it is said to the effect upon his stomach produced by some nostrum given to him by a quack doctor, caused his death on Sept. 1. He passed away at his summer residence at Canton, Pa., surrounded by nearly all the members of his beloved family, mourned and regretted by thousands of his countrymen. His old friend and associate, Dr. E. Chapin, performed the funeral services, and among the pall-bearers we find the names of William Cullen Bryant, Parke Godwin, Judge Daly and other distinguished men.

Opinions will probably differ as to the rank which Mr. Davenport should hold among the giants of his art, but if he be not enrolled among the very greatest of them, he is undoubtedly entitled to a lofty niche in the temple of fame, and if the most marvelous versatility ever possessed by an actor, be a test of the highest power, then to him must all bow as to a master. It has been said by one of his intimate friends, that "he was an actor by instinct and intuition," and that his "love for his profession, and the impulsive generosity of his nature, which allowed him to play anything and everything, confessedly marred his fame." In all the relations of life, he was a gentleman, courteous in every sense to those with

whom he came in contact, walking the earth as if he loved it, and ever ready to extend the right hand of fellowship to any who sought his aid, he quitted the sphere of his usefulness without an enemy, leaving a gap in the ranks of his profession, which it will be difficult to fill, and a reputation every way worthy and honorable, that of a polished and intellectual artist, and a generous, noble-minded, honest man.

HENRY EDWARDS.

Mr. Davenport is a young actor of such merit as to have been selected by Mr. Macready to support him in his farewell performances at the Haymarket. He is, as our readers are aware, an American by birth, but he appears to have adopted the mother country for the field of his exertions. Nature has been liberal to him; he has a handsome person and a graceful walk and action, with a voice of great variety, soft and musical, yet by no means deficient in power. His talent also is of a singularly versatile character; nothing comes amiss to him,—tragedy, comedy, melodrama, youth or age, mirth or melancholy, love or hatred, all find in him an able and powerful exponent. He represented *Othello* to Macready's *Iago*, and *Iago* to his *Othello*, *Cassius* to his *Brutus*, *Macduff* to his *Macbeth*, *Edgar* to his *Lear*, etc.; and his representation has been such as to raise an expectation that he will eventually become one of the tragic princes of our stage.

Tallis's Dramatic Magazine, March, 1851.

If Mr Forrest and Mr. Hackett have been recognized as the tragedian and comedian of America,

Mr. Davenport stands between them, partaking the powers of both if not to the extent of either. His is the tragi-comic genius, which holds the same place on the stage that the romantic play does in the drama,—that mixture of humor and passion which has always been a compound most agreeable to English feelings. That more plastic class of faculty which makes some sacrifice of depth in order to increase its range of surface, and which passes with equal truth from a *Benedick* to a *Romeo*, and a *Jaffier* to a *Faulconbridge*, has been illustrated in our time by the genius of Charles Kemble, and will soon have no exponent so accomplished as Mr. Davenport. Thus we see his great distinction, — an extraordinary versatility, in which he has no rival, with the sole exception of James Wallack, and for which his physical endowments are quite commensurate with his mental. Nature has been most liberal in her outfit of this gentleman, and his taste and artistic feeling show his sense of the obligation. He has an open, well-marked countenance, expressive eyes, and pliant brow, a voice that is clear and flexible, and a well-formed, manly person. We shall now notice his defects, which we do with the more willingness, since they are so easily removed. His acting is at present characterized more by vigor than refinement,—by attention to the leading features than the general treatment of a character; and thus is wanting in repose and in those finer shades of feeling which constitute, not only so much of truth, but of effect. This is the case with all young actors, whose first aim is to succeed, and whose evidence of success must be the applause that they elicit. But, success being

obtained, the point is how to make it permanent Mr. Davenport is in a position to solve this question without fear. Let him rely more upon his art and his own indisputable resources in giving completeness to conception, rather than special force and coloring, and he will rise, we feel assured, to a height in his profession which will place him among the truest and most lasting of its ornaments.

Bayle Bernard, in 'Tallis's Drawing-Room Table Book,' *p.* 12.

A striking quality of Mr. Davenport's acting is its quietness. His best points are made in repose. He is not, however, tame, for it is the energy of *mind* that is expressed, though not of body,—where the passion is supposed to be of a highly wrought nature. Excellent in all he undertakes, we are inclined to consider his *Othello* the best performance in his whole series. His *Moor* is midway between that of Charles Young and that of Edmund Kean; a little more highly colored in those passages where the former was, perhaps, too cold; less impetuous in those where the latter was magnificently and fearfully passionate.

'Actors As They Are,' New York, 1856.

E. L. Davenport, of Boston, was strongly recommended to Mr. Mowatt by old and leading members of the profession. His high moral character, his unassuming and gentleman-like manners, his wonderful versatility and indisputable talents, caused him to be selected as the person who was to travel with us during my second year on the stage. Upon this selection, every succeeding month and year gave us

new cause for congratulation. The prominent position he has since won upon the English stage, and the honors he has received from fastidious English audiences, are the first reward of intrinsic but unostentatious merit.

ANNA CORA MOWATT: 'Autobiography of an Actor,' *chap.* 14, *pp.* 253–4.

Forrest assigned a high exalted artistic rank to the very varied dramatic impersonations of Mr. E. L. Davenport, every one of whose rôles is marked by firm drawing, distinct light and shade, fine consistency and finish. His *Sir Giles Overreach* was hardly surpassed by Kean or Booth, and has not been approached by anybody else. His quick, alert, springy tread, full of fire and rapidity, the whole man in every step, fixed the attention and made every one feel that there was a terrific concentration of energy, an insane possession of the nerve centres, portending something frightful soon to come.

WM. R. ALGER: 'Life of Forrest,' *vol. ii., chap.* 16.

This incident serves to illustrate some of the peculiarities of Mr. Davenport's character, and explains his lack of thorough popular appreciation. The motives that inspired him to play *Edgar* were doubtless mixed, including a desire to see the play of 'King Lear' strengthened in its cast and improved in its general effect by the development of a minor part, and, very likely, the need of the pecuniary compensation therefor, for Mr. Davenport never could save money, and hence could spare little time to be idle. No fear of being overshadowed by others ever led him

to refuse any part; hence, as an able manager has since said, he was a far better man for his manager than for himself; for it was this very willingness to play anything and everything that kept him below his true place in the judgment of the careless majority. With them it indicated a low estimate of himself, and they could not appreciate the generosity, nor entirely comprehend the nature, of the man who would on one evening play three acts of 'Hamlet,' one of 'Black-Eyed Susan,' and wind up as a stage-struck Yankee in a roaring farce, as Mr. W. J. Florence remembers to have seen him do on one occasion.

HENRY P. GODDARD, in *Lippincott's Magazine*, April, 1878.

The opening scenes ['Black-Eyed Susan'] were not of thrilling interest; *Susan* was duly admired, and the usual sympathy felt for her and for "the pangs, the dreadful pangs, that tear the sailor's wife, as, wakeful on her tear-wet pillow, she lists and trembles at the roaring sea." *Doggrass* made himself odious in the eyes of the gallery; *Gnatbrain* threw the rolling-pin at him, and won a round of gallery applause; *Hatchet* paid the rent; *Susan* retired to her tear-wet pillow to list again, and so forth, when scene fourth is on, 'All in the Downs,' and enter Davenport as *William;* and oh, how briny a *William* in every look, and action, and accent, and hitch of trousers, of the salt sea salty was *William.*

What a shivering of timbers was there, and what splicings of the main brace, what belayings and what running over at the scuppers, ye lubbers! when he embraced his *Susan!* The first three scenes were but

the prologue ; and the play itself did not begin until *William* appeared, or the interest ripen, until actual trouble came to *Susan's* natural protector, when the *Captain* was upset, and the audience discovered who the victim of the protector's just indignation was, and the result to *William* of such a blow to his superior officer.

Davenport's acting in the final scene of the first act, when it was divested of the "clapping-on-of-the-main-top-bowline," and all of that ordinary nautical-drama business, was very powerful, and marked with an earnestness and artistic effect that the part of *William*, or its kindred parts, rarely received. . . . . .

There are occasions when the almost magnetic influence of a thoroughly appreciative audience can so stimulate and exalt an actor, that the character he enacts becomes an inspiration in his hands, and for this *William* and its impersonator, this first time we saw Mr. Davenport in the part, we claim this inspiration ; he carried the house with him ; and this fact, and the fact that he felt it, added fresh fuel to the fire of his genius. One of the standard jokes of the play, the only "funny business" in the trial scene, the reply of the boatswain, *Mr. Quid*, to the Admiral's inquiry as to *William's* moral character : "His moral character, your honor ? Why, he plays on the fiddle like an angel !" provoked not a smile ; it seemed irreverent to laugh, the audience grasping at any straw in *William's* favor. The decision of the Court, "Guilty," and the reading of the sentence, "Death," were terrible blows to *William's* scores of friends before the footlights ; and *William's* subdued "Poor *Susan*," found echo in every sympathizing heart in the audience.

The interest in the drama, however, did not reach its intensest point until the last scene of all—the execution. The farewells with his shipmates and friends, the last dying gifts and bequests, and his parting from *Susan*, were all very harrowing, and very real, and very choking; but the culmination was *William's* standing under the yard-arm, his bare neck ready for the rope that was "to launch" him, the parson on the black platform, the twelve melancholy-looking captains, the grief-stricken *Admiral Leffingwell*, and the entrance of *Captain Crosstree* with his pardon, and his honorable and explanatory speech. Never was a *Captain Crosstree* so well received!

We do not recall many evenings where a single great actor has so controlled and moved his audience as did Mr. Davenport on that occasion; and, as we look back upon it, and compare it with the playing of other actors, we can only account for it as being a true artist's handling of an impressive part. When *William* was finally released and congratulated, and when he took his *Black-Eyed Susan* in his arms, the audience made a personal matter of it, and cried over it as if it were their own personal and particular joy, and the Young Veteran, and all the rest of the boys in the pit, went home to their little beds, resolved, with the young *Columbus*, "to go and be sailor boys, by jingo, or die."

LAURENCE HUTTON: 'Plays and Players,' *chap.* 18.

Mr. Davenport played in a gentlemanly, quiet style, with much less elegance than Wallack, and much more feeling. I regard his performance [of *Hamlet*] as decidedly the superior of the two. It

showed deeper thought ; it was less stagey and tricky, more manly and natural ; but still it was tame, and at times uninteresting. It never once excited any real emotion in the audience ; it never made us feel.

ADAM BADEAU : the 'Vagabond,' 'Edwin Forrest.'

Mr. Davenport's laurels are all legitimate. Less than any other popular performer, who has a high position, is he liable to the charge of *ad captandum* tactics (catch the rabble). He does not seek to take his auditors by storm ; he is content with *winning* them. In his impersonations, calm judgment controls his impulses ; his action and declamation are never measured and gauged by the popular applause, but regulated by his own correct taste. He appears utterly unconscious of the presence of his audience. . . . . His conception of character, matured in his closet, is produced upon the stage as he has learned to understand it. He leaves nothing to chance-thought. Of course, like every man of genius, he is not insensible or unaided by the inspiration of the hour. In reviewing any one of his delineations one is struck with its harmony. None of its local lights and shades will be found to have been exaggerated, but the various parts appear so duly balanced that the impression left upon the mind is precisely that produced by a well-drawn, well-grouped, and well-colored picture.

H. D. STONE : 'Theatrical Reminiscences,' *chap.* 13, *pp.* 121–2.

CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN.

1816—1876.

For thee of earnest spirit and great heart,
In a fair time a fair and kindly death
Rounds a life nobly consecrate to art,
Nor lacking praiseful tribute of men's breath.
For us, like music ended ; a dead voice
That sounded sweet in our ears but yesternight,
The passion and power wherein men's souls rejoice
Are with the player buried out of sight.
Within our ears an unreturning tone
Of calm, majestic dignity still rings :
A reverent memory remains alone,
Sad sense of loss in sorrowful words that sings.
Yet, even as Art to Death her daughter gives,
Death bows to Art, for Art eternal lives.

H. C. Bunner.

CHARLOTTE SAUNDERS CUSHMAN.

[CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN. — Born Boston, July 23, 1816. First professional appearance, as a singer, in Boston, April, 1835. First appeared as an actress in the part of *Lady Macbeth* in New Orleans in the same year. First appeared in New York, and in the same part, Sept. 12, 1836. First visited England in 1844. First London appearance, as *Bianca*, Feb. 14, 1845. Returned to America, 1850. Again played in England in the summer of 1853. Played American engagements in 1857–8, 1860–1. First public reading, October, 1870. Last appearance in New York, Nov. 7, 1874. Last appearance in Boston, May 15, 1875. Last public appearance, as a reader, at Easton, Pa., June 2, 1875. Died in Boston, Feb. 18, 1876.

B. M.
L. H.]

Charlotte Saunders Cushman was born in Boston, July 23, 1816. She was descended from two families of honorable reputation in the early history of New England. Her father, Elkanah Cushman, was seventh in descent from Robert Cushman, who is famous as the preacher of the first sermon ever delivered in New England. Her mother, whose maiden name was Mary Eliza Babbit, was also of good Puritan stock.

The house in which Charlotte was born, on Richmond

Street, was on the same spot now occupied by the Cushman School, erected in 1867. The fact that this school was named after her gave Miss Cushman much satisfaction. After speaking of the honor of it, and of the proof it afforded of the esteem in which she was held in Boston, where never before had a school been named after a woman, she said, "Nothing in all my life has so pleased me as this."

Charlotte Cushman made her *début* on the stage as a Young Lady, in 1835, on the occasion of a concert, when she sang 'Take this Rose,' and other songs. At that time she intended to study for the operatic stage, but after a short experience as a singer, in New Orleans, she determined to become an actress rather than to strive to be a *prima donna*. When but nineteen years old she took the part of *Lady Macbeth*, and from this time devoted herself zealously to the study of the dramatic profession. At first she had no decided preference for any particular line of dramatic business, and in her earlier impersonations took a great variety of parts. She studied her comedy characters conscientiously, and rendered them with a certain charm, but it was as a tragic actress, and especially in Shaksperean tragedy that she won her highest fame, and will be longest remembered. In her representations of *Queen Katherine* and *Lady Macbeth* she took her place as the greatest American actress that has yet lived. Her impersonations of *Meg Merrilies*, *Nancy Sikes*, and other melodramatic parts were also rich in striking effects.

Miss Cushman was accorded a high position as an actress in England. Macready fully recognized, and generously acknowledged her power. He even

declared that when playing *Macbeth* to her *Lady Macbeth* he felt himself to be "less than of secondary importance—in truth, a mere thing of naught."

Her career as an actress extended over forty years, and she made her last appearance, as she had made the first, in her native city, and in the midst of those, who, as she herself said, "from the beginning to the end of my career, from my first appearance on the stage to my last appearance, have been truly 'Brothers, friends and countrymen.'"

Charlotte Cushman was an ardent patriot, and during the War of the Rebellion she proved this in many ways; she contributed to the Sanitary Commission $8,267, the result of her earnings when she acted especially for the benefit of this charity.

In her private life she was affectionate, even tender, having a singular fondness for children; she was also strong, and her friends turned to her for support and sympathy. She had a deep religious trust, and bore the sufferings of a long and painful illness with wonderful fortitude. In short, under all circumstances, as she expressed it, she "tried always to keep her prow turned towards good."

Miss Cushman died, at the Parker House, in Boston, Feb. 18, 1876. Three days later her funeral took place at King's Chapel, and was conducted according to her own minute directions. She was buried at Mount Auburn in a spot which she had selected for her resting-place, because it commanded a view of Boston. Her grave is marked by a plain granite shaft, which bears no inscription save the name of "Charlotte Cushman."

CLARA ERSKINE CLEMENT.

So enraptured was I with the idea of acting this part [*Lady Macbeth*, in New Orleans], and so fearful of anything preventing me, that I did not tell the manager I had no dresses, until it was too late for me to be prevented from acting it; and the day before the performance, after rehearsal, I told him. He immediately sat down and wrote a note of introduction for me to the *tragedienne* of the French Theatre, which then employed some of the best among French artists for its company. This note was to ask her to help me to costumes for the *rôle* of *Lady Macbeth*. I was a tall, thin, lanky girl at that time, about five feet six inches in height. The French woman, Madame Closel, was a short, fat person of not more than four feet ten inches, waist full twice the size of mine, with a very large bust; but her shape did not prevent her being a very great actress. The ludicrousness of her clothes being made to fit me struck her at once. She roared with laughter; but she was very good-natured, saw my distress, and set to work to see how she could help it. By dint of piecing out the skirt of one dress it was made to answer for an underskirt, and then another dress was taken in in every direction to do duty as an overdress, and so make up the costume. And thus I essayed for the first time the part of *Lady Macbeth*, fortunately to the satisfaction of the audience, the manager, and all the members of the company.

CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN, in Miss Stebbins's 'Charlotte Cushman,' *chap.* 1, *pp.* 22–3.

The Miss Cushman who acted *Lady Macbeth* interested me much. She has to learn her art, but she

showed mind and sympathy with me,—a novelty so refreshing to me on the stage.

WM. C. MACREADY : 'Diary,' Boston, Oct. 23, 1843.

Miss Cushman's style of acting, while it lacked imagination, possessed in a remarkable degree the elements of force. She grasped the intellectual body of the poet's conception without mastering its more subtle spirit ; she caught the facts of a character, but its conceits were beyond her reach. Her understanding was never at fault ; it was keen and penetrating, but that glow of feeling which springs from the centre of emotional elements was not a prominent constituent of her organization. She was intensely prosaic, definitely practical ; and hence her perfect identity with what may be termed the materialism of *Lady Macbeth*, and the still more fierce personality of that dramatic nondescript, *Meg Merrilies*, neither of which characters was of 'imagination all compact,' but rather of imperious wilfulness.

JAMES E. MURDOCH : 'The Stage,' *chap.* 12, *p.* 240.

It was in consequence of Mrs. Chippendale's illness that she was called upon on the very day of the performance to assume the part. Study, dress, etc., had to be an inspiration of the moment. She had never especially noticed the part ; as it had been heretofore performed there was not probably much to attract her ; but as she stood at the side-scene, book in hand, awaiting her moment of entrance, her ear caught the dialogue going on upon the stage between two of the gypsies, in which one says to the other, alluding to her, "*Meg*,—why, she is no longer what she was ; she

doats," etc., evidently giving the impression that she is no longer to be feared or respected, that she is no longer in her right mind. With the words a vivid flash of insight struck upon her brain. She saw and felt, by the powerful dramatic instinct with which she was endowed, the whole meaning and intention of the character ; and no doubt from that moment it became what it never ceased to be, a powerful, original, and consistent conception in her mind. She gave herself with her usual concentrated energy of purpose to this conception, and flashed at once upon the stage in the startling, weird and terrible manner which we all so well remember. On this occasion it so astonished and confounded Mr. Braham—little accustomed heretofore to such manifestations—that he went to her after the play to express his surprise and his admiration.

"I had not thought that I had done anything remarkable," she says, "and when the knock came at my dressing-room door, and I heard Braham's voice, my first thought was, Now what have I done? He is surely displeased with me about something,—for in those days I was only the utility actress, and had no prestige of position to carry me through. Imagine my gratification when Mr. Braham said : 'Miss Cushman, I have come to thank you for the most veritable sensation I have experienced for a long time. I give you my word, when I turned and saw you in that first scene I felt a cold chill run all over me. Where have you learned to do anything like that?'"

Miss Stebbins's 'Charlotte Cushman,' *chap.* 7, *pp.* 147–9.

'Guy Mannering' is very nicely produced at the

Haymarket. The scenery is new, the cast is tolerably good, and there is one piece of acting in it of an excellent and very striking kind. Miss Cushman's melodramatic *Meg Merrilies* has quite as indisputably the attributes of genius about it as any piece of poetry or tragedy could have. Such is her power over the intention and feeling of the part that the mere words of it become a secondary matter. It is the figure, the gait, the look, the gesture, the tone, by which she puts beauty and passion into language the most indifferent. When these mere artifices are continued through a series of scenes, a certain strain becomes apparent, and the effect is not wholly agreeable. Nevertheless, it is something to see what the unassisted resources of acting may achieve with the mere idea of a fine part, stripped of fine language, unclothed, as it were, in words. The human tenderness blending with that Eastern picturesqueness of gesture, the refined sentiment breaking out from beneath that heavy feebleness and clumsiness of rude old age, are wonderfully startling.

HENRY MORLEY: 'Journal of a London Playgoer,' Feb. 11, 1884.

It is necessary that the actor should learn to think before he speaks. Let him remember first, that every sentence expresses a new thought, and therefore frequently demands a change of intonation; secondly, that the thought precedes the word. Of course, there are passages in which thought and language are borne along by the stream of emotion and completely intermingled. But more often it will be found that the most natural, the most seemingly accidental, effects

are obtained when the working of the mind is seen before the tongue gives it words. This lesson was enjoined on me when I was a very young man by that remarkable actress, Charlotte Cushman. I remember that when she played *Meg Merrilies*, I was cast for *Henry Bertram*, on the principle seemingly that an actor with no singing voice is admirably fitted for a singing part. It was my duty to give *Meg Merrilies* a piece of money, and I did it after the traditional fashion by handing her a large purse full of coin of the realm, in the shape of broken crockery, which was generally used in financial transactions on the stage, because when the virtuous maiden rejected with scorn the advances of the lordly libertine, and threw his pernicious bribe upon the ground, the clatter of the broken crockery suggested fabulous wealth. But after the play, Miss Cushman, in the course of some kindly advice, said to me, "Instead of giving me that purse, don't you think it would have been much more natural if you had taken a number of coins from your pocket and given me the smallest? That is the way one gives alms to a beggar, and it would have added greatly to the realism of the scene." I have never forgotten that lesson, for simple as it was, it contained many elements of dramatic truth.

HENRY IRVING: Harvard Address, reported in the *Critic*, April 4, 1885.

Her marvelous talent for what is technically called "making up," presents us with the picture that lives so indelibly in our memory; her exquisite elocution enables her to accommodate her voice to the necessities of the unusual situations of the play, to break it with

age, to thicken it with the choking sensation of death, to loosen it in the cry of agony, to repress it in the hollow murmur of despair; while the genius that makes her feel so acutely the proprieties of the character is only equalled by the consummate art that dictates and accomplishes such touches as her sliding, sidelong gait; her frantic but significant gestures; her attitudes, so ungainly, but so widely expressive, that they speak more forcibly than words. I can conceive of no more exact, no more effective picture, than that afforded by Miss Cushman's performance of *Meg Merrilies*.

ADAM BADEAU: 'The Vagabond,' Charlotte Cushman.

Of her *Nancy Sikes*, Mr. Lawrence Barrett, who had appeared with her as *Fagin*, spoke to me, in substance, as follows: It was an astonishing thing, as well to those of the profession as to the public,—but the death scene was simply superlative in effect; she dragged herself on to the stage in a wonderful manner, and, keeping her face away from her audience, produced a feeling of chilly horror by the management of her voice as she called for *Bill*, and begged of him to kiss her. Mr. Barrett said, "it sounded as if she *spoke through blood*, and the whole effect was far greater than that which any other actress has ever made, with the sight of the face and all the horrors which can be added." This part was eminently her own creation, conceived at a time when she had had small opportunity for any good training.

CLARA ERSKINE CLEMENT: 'Life of Charlotte Cushman,' *chap.* 3, *p.* 25.

Had I not found your note on coming home from the theatre, I *must* have written to you after the *Queen Katherine*, which I went to see quietly. You are wholly wrong *to fancy that the part does not do you good, and you good to the part.* What will you say when I tell you that it has given me a higher idea of your power than any I have yet seen you act? I like it all, —conception, execution, everything. I like the plainness, the simplicity, and the utter absence of all strain or solemnity.

You know I am difficult, and little given to praising any one. Most of all was I delighted to hear how your level voice, when not forced, tells, and tells thoroughly. Now believe I don't say this to put you in good humor, or for any other reason than because it is honest and *must* come!

As for the critics, remember that from time immemorial they have been always, at first, unjust to new and natural readings. The *house* shows how little harm or good they do, and of *its* humor there was no doubt; though people who have been wiping their eyes on apricot-colored bonnet-strings, as I saw one young lady of nature doing, can't find time or coolness to applaud anything as they ought. In short, I was pleased, *much* pleased, and shall tell you yet more about the same when I see you; and I am truly glad for your own sake that you have played the part.

HENRY F. CHORLEY, quoted in Miss Stebbins's 'Charlotte Cushman,' *chap.* 4, *pp.* 71–2.

Romeo, *Claude Melnotte*, *Cardinal Wolsey*, and *Hamlet*, are among the most prominent of the male parts she has played. Her *Cardinal Wolsey* was a most

remarkable performance. She is no doubt the only woman who has had the courage and the ability to undertake it. Another marvelous assumption of hers was *Romeo*. She was earnest, intense, and natural. The constitutional susceptibility of *Romeo's* character was depicted by her in its boldest relief,—a particular phase of the nature of the young *Montague*, which no male actor, unless he were a mere youth, could efficiently and satisfactorily portray.

In the 'Lady of Lyons' she has played the *Widow Melnotte*,—she was the original *Widow Melnotte* in New York,—*Pauline* and *Claude*. She acquired high repute for her *Claude* in England, and drew crowded houses at the Old Broadway, in 1850, when she first assumed it, the public seemingly greatly to relish the earnest and truthful manner in which she played the familiar character.

LAURENCE HUTTON: 'Plays and Players,' *chap.* 27.

She is the finest American actress I have ever seen. I have played an engagement with her at the Lyceum, and I have altered pieces for her in which she has made great successes. I remember that I first saw her at the Walnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia. She was directress of that house then, and quite young, with a fine spice of fun in her composition, the influence of which I remember feeling on one occasion in particular. It was the custom there to ring down the curtain on Saturday night exactly as the clock struck the hour of eleven. I was ignorant of that, and just as I sat down before my audience and got half through a conversation over a table in my character of the 'Irish Lion,' the curtain went suddenly down,

to my intense astonishment. "Is the house on fire?" I asked; and just then I saw the face of our directress, laughing heartily in one of the wings of the stage. I was prepared for another occasion, and she never laughed at me again on the same score.

JOHN BROUGHAM, reported in *The Times*, Boston, Oct. 25, 1874.

The following anecdote illustrates Miss Cushman's decision and nerve. At the National Theatre, Boston, during the season of 1851–52, as she was playing *Romeo* to the *Juliet* of Miss Anderton, in the midst of one of the most romantic passages between the lovers, some person in the house sneezed in such a manner as to attract the attention of the whole audience, and every one new that the sneeze was artificial and derisive. Miss Cushman instantly stopped the dialogue, and led Miss Anderton off the stage, as a cavalier might lead a lady from the place where an insult had been offered her. She then returned to the footlights and said in a clear, firm voice, "Some man must put that person out, or I shall be obliged to do it myself." The fellow was taken away; the audience rose *en masse* and gave three cheers for Miss Cushman, who recalled her companion and proceeded with the play as if nothing had happened. . . . . .

CLARA ERSKINE CLEMENT: 'Charlotte Cushman,' *chap.* 6, *pp.* 67–69.

The younger generation of playgoers are only familiar with Miss Cushman's histrionic interpretations of *Meg Merrilies*, *Lady Macbeth*, and *Queen Katharine*. The recollection of these renderings will

suffice to illustrate the foregoing summary, without further elaboration of detail. Miss Cushman is now mainly confining herself to the reading-desk. There can be no question that her peculiar intellectualism in art is shown even more in her readings than in her acting, notably so in the Shaksperean readings. In the dramas of Shakspere, the characters have so essential a play of relation, and are so subtile in their bearings on one another, that, unless they are all justly apprehended, the totality of the drama is maimed and marred. No genius on the part of Charlotte Cushman could prevent this on the stage. In the reading-desk she reigns as the sole magician, with the perfect opportunity to express the finest attainments of her thinking and culture. She has but to wave her wand to unlock from the prison-house of Shakspere's pages all the immortal phantoms that brood within them. It is for her alone to invest them with a splendid and subtile life.

Miss Cushman's devotion to art remains unchanged. For many years she has been among those

> Who live to be the show and gaze of the time.

That she may remain so for many years to come, and continue to illustrate her great dramatic conceptions, as none but she can, is the hope of thousands of admirers on both sides of the Atlantic.

GEORGE T. FERRIS, in *Appleton's Journal*, March 21, 1874.

Charlotte Cushman is dead. Before the shock of this news has passed away it cannot be improper to recall to her professional brethren the great loss we

sustain by this sudden departure. After a long life of toil, laden with years and honors, she sleeps at last. That crown which she has worn for so many years undisputed now lies upon a coffin beside which a whole nation will mourn. The world contained no greater spirit, no nobler woman. Her genius filled the world with admiration, and the profession which she adorned and ruled must long await her successor. This is not the place, nor is mine the pen, to write her history; larger space and abler hands will see that duty performed. These lines are traced by one who loved her living, and weeps for her now dead. Her career is an incentive and an example to all the workers in our noble art. A woman of genius, industrious and religious, her best education was obtained within the circle of her calling. Almost masculine in manner, there was yet a gentleness in her which only her intimates could know. The voice which crooned the lullaby of the *Bertram's* so touchingly came from a heart as gentle as infancy. To all who labor in the realms of art, and to my profession most especially, the loss of this day will be a severe one. Bigotry itself must stand abashed before the life of our dead Queen, whose every thought and act were given for years to an art which ignorance and envy have battled against in vain for centuries. To her, our Queen, we say: "Peace and farewell! We shall not look upon her like again."

LAWRENCE BARRETT, in the *New York Herald*, Feb. 19, 1876.

As a tragic actress, Charlotte Cushman held an unsurpassed position. Of her greatness in her own art, there is no question. Shakspere in our day has

had no grander exponent than she. Generally, the actor who appears in Shakspere is lifted upon the mighty wings of his passion and borne aloft to heights which, to his own powers, were inaccessible. Why do the clouds fly so fast and the birds shoot through the air? Their speed is not their own; they are carried in the invisible arms of irresistible storms. Often Ariel wins the credit which is due to his master, Prospero, who has broken his staff, drowned his book, and lies sleeping on the banks of Avon. But this was not entirely true of Miss Cushman. She frequently rose to the level of the Shaksperean mind, was kindled with the Shaksperean fire, so that in her inspired moments she realized the character. It was not always thus, for the greatest of actors can only effect by supreme effort that which Shakspere did with apparently unconscious ease. But it is enough glory for an actress when she can cause her auditors to forget, even if only for a moment, the difference between the *Lady Macbeth* of the stage and the *Lady Macbeth* of the book; that she, too, has something of that magic which deludes men to delight, and is able to re-create with no unworthy hand creations which are unrivaled in imagination. In relation to her own art, Charlotte Cushman stood easily upon its topmost height, as compared with other famous actresses of her time. But were this all that could be said of her, there would be room for misapprehension of her true position among the intellectual women of this century who have worked in other professions. She rendered an inestimable service to her sex by demonstrating the most brilliant methods, and, with conclusive force, the extent of its intellectual capacity. To judge that high

service rightly, the relation of the drama to the other arts must be remembered. The disadvantages of the stage, as a lasting proof of individual genius, have been already pointed out, and, because of these, there is danger that Charlotte Cushman may be undervalued.

JOHN D. STOCKTON, in the *Century Magazine*, June, 1876.

ANNA CORA MOWATT.

1819—1870.

MRS. MOWATT.

A being young and fair,
  In purest white arrayed,
With timid grace tripped down the stair,
  Half eager, half afraid!

As on the misty height
  Soft blushes young Aurora,
She dawned upon our dazzled sight,
  Our graceful modest Cora!

FRANCES S. OSGOOD.

ANNA CORA MOWATT.

Mrs. Mowatt's career upon the stage was very remarkable in many ways. She was an actress and a star, born not made. Taking a leading part in her profession without training or experience, she was never behind the scenes of a theatre until she was carried to witness a rehearsal of her 'Fashion' on the day of its first production, at the Park Theatre, New York, March 24, 1845. She had but one rehearsal of the 'Lady of Lyons' before she made her *début*, and she became an actress, and a triumphant one, three weeks after her determination to follow the profession was formed. Her reasons for taking this step were as remarkable as the result of it. Her success as a playwright, she says, determined her to attempt and to achieve like success as a player. Every one familiar with the history of the theatre since it has had a history, knows how great is the difference between production and performance, how few the actors who have written clever plays, how few the authors who have become distinguished on the stage. The popularity of Mrs. Elizabeth Thompson Butler's battle pictures would hardly encourage her to lead armies into the field, nor would Von Bülow succeed were he to attempt the construction of a grand piano. Gunmakers are proverbially bad marksmen,

and critics are the men who fail to make salable books.

Mrs. Mowatt, however, had several things in her favor not always to be found in cases like hers. She was possessed of uncommon intelligence and grace, she was a gentle woman, refined and earnest, and she had a good cause, the support of a husband unfortunate in business, and too feeble in health to support himself. Her first appearance was at the Park Theatre, New York, June 13, 1845, less than three months after the production of her comedy ; and the occasion was the benefit of W. H. Crisp, who had given her the little instruction her limited time permitted her to receive and who played *Claude Melnotte* to her *Pauline*, Mrs. Vernon representing *Madam Deschappelles*. The house was crowded, the applause genuine and discriminating; and unprejudiced and experienced critics pronounced her a complete success.

On July 13 of the same year (1845) she appeared at Niblo's Garden, New York, as *Juliana* in the 'Honeymoon,' her second part, supported by Mr. Crisp, Wm. Chippendale, E. L. Davenport, Thomas Placide, John Sefton, and Mrs. Watts (afterwards Mrs. Sefton). During the first year she was upon the stage she acted more than two hundred nights, and in almost every important city in the United States, playing *Lady Teazle*, *Mrs. Haller*, *Lucy Ashton*, *Katherine* (the Shrew,) *Julia*, *Juliet*, and all the leading characters in the same line. The amount of labor, physical and mental, she performed during this period must have been enormous, and the intellectual strain alone was enough to have destroyed the strongest constitution. In the annals of the stage in all countries there is no

single instance of a mere novice playing so many important parts so many times before so many different audiences and winning so much merited praise as did Mrs. Mowatt during the first twelve months of her career as an actress.

In the autumn of 1847, Mrs. Mowatt sailed for England, where her success was as marked as in her own country, and much more, unquestionably, to her professional credit. She had to contend against a certain international prejudice, which has now entirely disappeared on both sides of the Atlantic, she was compared, in their own familiar parts, with the leading English actresses of long experience, and she could not depend upon the social popularity and personal goodwill which aided her so powerfully at home. She made her English *début* in Manchester shortly after her arrival, and her first appearance in London at the Princess's Theatre, Jan. 5, 1848, in the 'Hunchback,' Mr. E. L. Davenport, who had played with her on her American tour, giving her excellent support during her English engagement. She returned to New York in the summer of 1851 greatly improved in health, in personal appearance, and in her art; and her subsequent career was marked with uniform success.

She took her farewell of the stage at Niblo's Garden on June 3, 1854. As her 'Autobiography' was published previously, her reason for retirement is not known, unless it was on account of her marriage to Mr. Wm. F. Ritchie, a few days later. She selected her maiden part, *Pauline*. A testimonial, signed by many prominent persons, and highly eulogistic, was presented to her; and her last appearance created as

great an excitement in the social and dramatic world as did her first.

Anna Cora Ogden was born in 1819 in Bordeaux, France, during a short visit of her parents to that country. When she was fifteen years of age she married James Mowatt, a lawyer of New York. She made her first appearance in public as a reader in the Masonic Temple, Boston, in 1841. During the same year she gave readings in the hall of the old Stuyvesant Institute, New York. In 1845, as has been shown, she went upon the stage. Mr. Mowatt died in London in the spring of 1851. She became Mrs. Ritchie on June 7, 1854. She lived in retirement in France, Italy, and England for some years, and she died at Henley-on-Thames in 1870. Mrs. Mowatt is described by those who remember her in the first flush of her youth as a fascinating actress and accomplished woman: "in person, fragile and exquisitely delicate, with a face in whose calm depths the beautiful and fine alone were mirror'd" — "a voice ever soft, gentle, and low, a subdued earnestness of manner, a winning witchery of enunciation, and a grace and refinement in every action."

She was an industrious contributor to the periodical press before and after her retirement, devoting much of her time to her pen. Her more elaborate works include 'Fashion: a Comedy' (1845); an epic poem in five acts called 'Pelayo, or the Cavern of Covadonga;' 'Armand: a Drama,' first played at the Broadway Theatre, Sept. 27, 1847; the 'Autobiography of an Actress' (1854); the 'Fortune Hunter,' a novel of New York Society; 'Mimic Life, or Before and Behind the Curtain' (1856); and 'Gulzara, or

the Persian Slave,' an early production which was remarkable simply for the fact that it was a play without a hero, the only male character in the *dramatis personæ* being a boy of ten years.

While Mrs. Mowatt's easy and sudden success has turned many a head, and inspired scores of her sex to attempt to follow in her footsteps, only to make as easy and sudden failure, bringing distress to themselves and the patient public, the stage owes much to her for her example and influence as a woman, while her sisters in the profession owe much more to her for the kind words she has spoken of them in her 'Autobiography' and 'Mimic Life,' and the encouragement she has extended to the humble actresses who contribute in their small way so much to the public amusement, and who by the public are so often misrepresented and ignored.

LAURENCE HUTTON.

Her first reading was given at the Masonic Temple on Thursday evening, Oct. 28, 1841. She carried with her the heart of every listener, for she exhibited the most beautiful moral spectacle of which human nature is capable, that of a wife turning her accomplishments to account, to relieve the necessities of her husband. Her youth and beauty though sufficient in themselves to command attention were lost sight of when she began to speak, and one had leisure only to regard the exquisite tones of her voice as it gave utterance to her admirable conceptions of poetical genius. Her stay in this city was brief, but the judgment then pronounced upon her abilities was final, for having passed

through the ordeal of Boston criticism and met with approval, she fearlessly went forth to fascinate by the loveliness of her person, and to captivate by genuineness of her talent.

W. W. Clapp: 'Boston Stage,' *chap.* 31.

The day of my *début* was fixed. It was in the month of June, 1854. I had three weeks only for preparation. Incessant study, training—discipline of a kind which the actor-student alone can appreciate—were indispensable to perfect success. I took fencing lessons to gain firmness of position and freedom of limb. I used dumb-bells, to overcome the constitutional weakness of arms and chest. I exercised my voice during four hours every day, to increase its power. I wore a voluminous train for as many hours daily, to learn the graceful management of queenly or classic robes. . . . The day before my *début* it was necessary that I should rehearse with the company. I found this a severer ordeal than performing before the public. Once more I stood upon the dimly-lighted gloomy stage not now in the position of an author to observe, to criticise, to suggest, but to be observed, to be criticised, very possibly—nay, very probably—to be ridiculed if I betrayed the slightest ignorance of what I attempted. . . . . The play ended, the curtain fell. It would be impossible to describe my sensations of relief as I watched that welcome screen of coarse green baize, slowly unrolling itself and dropping between the audience and the stage. Then came the call before the curtain—the crossing of the stage in front of the footlights. Mr. C—— led me out. The whole house rose—even the ladies, a compliment seldom paid. I

think it must have *rained* flowers; for bouquets, wreaths of silver and wreaths of laurel fell in showers around us. Cheer followed cheer as they were gathered up and laid in my arms. The hats of gentlemen and handkerchiefs of ladies waved on every side. I courtesied my thanks, and the welcome green curtain once more shut out the brilliant assemblage. Then came the deeper, truer sense of thankfulness. The trial was over; the *débutante* had stood the test; she had not mistaken the career which had been clearly pointed out as the one for which she was destined.

ANNA CORA MOWATT: 'Autobiography of an Actress,' *chap.* 12.

When I made my *début* I was only prepared in one part; yet before the close of the year, I had enacted all the most popular characters in juvenile comedy and tragedy. From this fact some estimate may be found of the amount of study requisite. Often after a protracted rehearsal in the morning and an arduous performance at night, I returned home from the theatre, wearied out in mind and body; yet I dared not rest. The character to be represented on the succeeding night still required several hours of reflection and application Sometimes I kept myself awake by bathing my heavy eyes and throbbing temples with iced water, as I committed the words to memory. Sometimes I could only battle with the angel who

Knits up the ravelled sleeve of care.

by rapidly pacing the room, while I studied. Now

and then I was fairly conquered and fell asleep over my books.

Ibid., *chap.* 13.

One evening the property man. . . . . forgot the bottle containing *Juliet's* sleeping potion. The omission was only discovered at the moment the vial was needed. Some bottle must be furnished to the *Friar*, or he cannot utter the solemn charge with which he confides the drug to the perplexed scion of the Capulets. The property man, confused at his discovering his own neglect, and fearful of the fine to which it would subject him, caught up the first small bottle at hand, and gave it to the *Friar*. The vial was the prompter's, and contained *ink*. When *Juliet* snatched the fatal potion from the *Friar's* hand, he whispered something in an undertone. I caught the words, "so take care," but was too absorbed in my part to comprehend the warning. *Juliet* returns home—meets her parents—retires to her own chamber—dismisses her nurse—and finally drinks the potion. At the words,—

Romeo! this do I drink to thee!

I placed the bottle to my lips, and unsuspiciously swallowed the inky draught. The dark stain upon my hands and lips might have been mistaken for the quick workings of the poison, for the audience remained ignorant of the mishap, which I only half comprehended. When the scene closed, the prompter rushed up to me exclaiming, "Good gracious! you have been drinking from my bottle of ink!" I could not resist the temptation of quoting the remark of the

dying wit under similar circumstances—"Let me swallow a piece of blotting paper."

Ibid., chap. 13.

Her American success might have been attributed to the sympathy deeply felt for a countrywoman so fair and unfortunate; but when, in after years, a career of equal brilliancy was accorded her in the more fastidious theatrical circles of our fatherland it could scarcely be doubted as the result of appreciated skill and merit.

JOSEPH N. IRELAND: 'Annals of the New York Stage,' *vol. ii., chap.* 24.

Of her career through the country her own narrative affords sufficient details. Her friends watched her progress with almost painful interest. They feared that injudicious flattery might prevent her from pursuing that course of close study and earnest application which can alone create the great actress. When she returned to New York, and produced her 'Armand,' I witnessed with great satisfaction its favorable reception, and her own improvement as an actress. Her departure for England followed shortly after the production of 'Armand,' and on her return to New York I was immediately requested to renew our personal intercourse.

I found her to my astonishment developed into a magnificently formed woman, vigorous and healthy, and beaming with geniality and hopefulness; and from that period until her departure for England, in 1860, our personal intercourse was only interrupted by her occasional professional absences from New York. I have hundreds of her letters preserved, which she

used to say I should find useful in delineating her life and character if I survived her. They all breathe the truest feelings that ever warmed a woman's breast.

The professional career of Mrs. Mowatt, after her return to New York, was marked by uniform success; the reputation and standing she had acquired in England established her claim here, and her closing professional labors were satisfactory, both artistically and professionally. This success, however, was interrupted by a painful and dangerous illness. During this retirement from her professional labors I frequently visited her at her father's residence at Ravenswood, and witnessed with admiration the traits of character this almost fatal illness developed. She was cheerful and resigned to a degree that could only have been the result of a Christian spirit. I saw her a day or two before the operation was to be performed by her friend and physician, Dr. Valentine Mott, and found her actually joyous over the successful experiments he had been making with chloroform. The operation was most successfully performed, and she was restored to comparative health and to the society of her doting father and friends. These remembrances confirm the statements she has made in her autobiography that Christian confidence was her support through the painful struggles and dangerous attacks she encountered during her residence in England, which culminated in the loss of her first husband, Mr. James Mowatt.

J. W. S. H., in the New York *Tribune*, August 22, 1870.

I had a little adventure of my own when Mrs.

Mowatt was at Niblo's. It was the last night of her stage-life. The house was crowded to its utmost capacity with a fashionable audience, many of them personal friends of the lovely woman whose history all New Yorkers know; who has gone back to grace the society that claimed her for one of its brightest ornaments ere the world at large knew of her traits or her charms. The throng was so great that I could find no place but the passageway in the dress-circle, and there I sat on the floor. A fine, gray-headed old man was on the sofa next to me, and opened the conversation, remarked the immense concourse, and said it reminded him of the Théâtre Français in the days of Talma. From the crowd to the actress was a ready transition, so we fell to discussing Mrs. Mowatt. I said she was charming and clever, and wondered if her graces were natural or acquired. My acquaintance insisted that they were natural; in fact, he knew they were so. Then I wondered if this was really her last appearance, and surmised that she would soon return to the stage. "No," said my friend, "she will be married in a month." I knew of that before, and told him the day, but we did not agree upon the date, and the fine, old gray-headed gentleman thought he ought to know best since "he was her father." Of course I admitted the probability of his being correctly informed, and apologized for the freedom of my criticisms; he declared, however, that they had not been offensive, and even if they had proved unfavorable that I was not to blame. But I could not remember having been very sensorious, and we chatted away all the evening.

ADAM BADEAU: the 'Vagabond.'

"Home and rest" did not signify selfish ease. The energy that had led her—who, up to the hour of Mr. Mowatt's financial ruin, had been the petted darling of a luxurious home—to devote the best years of her life to the laborious calling for which she believed the bent of her talents best fitted her, that she might stay her husband's failing forces, kept her up now to the full measure of the duties prescribed by heart and conscience. Her sympathy with the working woman was unfailing. Her own habits were as methodical as when she was bound by the rigid necessities of study and rehearsal. To every hour was allotted its occupation and each was performed well. Nothing that could advance another's welfare, were that other the lowest menial of her household, was ignoble in her sight. While as Secretary of the Mount Vernon Association her voluminous correspondence was a severe tax upon time and strength, and her numerous social duties were never neglected, she could yet oversee every department of her neat establishment; give lessons in elocution to a young girl who wished to become a public reader; write letters of friendship and business; supply weekly articles upon various subjects, not only for the *Enquirer* but for other periodicals, and prepare 'Mimic Life,' the most thoughtful study and, in most respects, the best of her published volumes.

At this time the proceeds of her literary work were devoted to private charities. I learned this accidentally, and not from herself. So far was she above the paltry ambition to play the Lady Bountiful that she shrank from the expressed gratitude of her beneficiaries. When she did a favor it was with grace and

sweetness, which conveyed the impression that she was made richer, not impoverished by the privilege of giving. . . . . .

I have written this sketch—so tame and imperfect in my sight when I compare it with the living, ever-fresh picture enshrined in my mind—impelled by conscience and affection to add a leaf to the record of a pure, beneficent life.

While she was on the stage the boldest tongue durst not utter a syllable derogatory to her honor and her discretion. In the might of her innocence she neither saw nor felt the fires that had scorched and slain their thousands. In stooping to rescue others she had gathered no smirch—not so much as the smell of fire upon her white garments. Seeing this, men marveled with loud admiration and praised her as a demi-goddess. But when, at the beckoning of Love, she stepped down from her pedestal, the world remembered her no more Few cared to follow her into retirement to note what work would there be done by the brave spirit and great, loving heart. If her fame as an artist belongs to the history of histrionic art in America, the knowledge of her womanly virtues should make her name a household treasure.

I would, at the risk of misconstruction of my motives, and, it may be, censure of the act itself, testify in some poor sort to the good she did in the sphere which the admirers of the actress deemed narrow and poor. She, in the beauty of her humility and unerring perception of the divinity of humanity, esteemed it exceeding broad. Having known and loved and learned of her as it was my pleasure and honor to know and listen and be taught, I cannot

withhold love's tribute to the breadth and holiness of the charity, the fidelity to truth and right, the zealous labor for others' weal, the Christian love, faith, and hope that made this woman's life and character as "round and perfect as a star."

MARIAN HARLAND : 'Personal Recollections of a Christian Actress,' in *Our Continent*, March 15, 1882.

HELEN FAUCIT (LADY MARTIN).

'Tis not the dove-like softness of thine eyes
My pensive gaze that draws, however fair;
A holier charm within their beauty lies,
The unspotted soul, that's mirrored always there.

There every thought of thy young heart is seen,
Radiant and pure, by truth and genius given,
As, on the surface of the lake serene
Reflected, gleams the perfect light of heaven.

WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY.

HELEN FAUCIT (LADY MARTIN).

Helen Faucit occupies a peculiar position among the players of the present day. Though she is herself emphatically an actress of this generation, with all the culture and general breadth of mind which the great artists of to-day must possess to be in sympathy with the development of the age, Helen Faucit's is yet a classical name as certainly as John Kemble's or Mrs. Siddons's. In her, students of acting have found a standard by which to try all her successors: a model with which to compare them. No higher praise can be given to a *Rosalind*, a *Juliet*, or a *Lady Macbeth*, than to say that it suggests Helen Faucit's. Why she occupies this unique position is intelligible to those who have studied her acting: still clearer to those who have studied her writings as well as herself. If her book on 'Some of Shakspere's Female Characters' had been the work of a mere student of the stage, it would have been a delightful and valuable one: being as it is, a revelation of a great artist's method of work, as well as an exposition of her theories, it is of unusual interest. Its value for future time can only be gauged by considering how much wider would be our knowledge, had we such a book written by Betterton, or any of the great ones who have been.

Helen Faucit was born on Oct. 11, 1820. Her

father, John Saville Faucit, was an actor and dramatic writer of some repute; her mother and her sister Harriet were talented and highly esteemed performers. Helen Faucit, the youngest of the family, was a delicate child. No doubt naturally reflective, circumstances tended to encourage habits of thoughtfulness; for her health was so delicate that she was taken away from school and spent long months at the seaside, with books as her chief companions,—her favorites being Shakspere, the 'Arabian Nights,' the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' 'Paradise Lost' and a translation of Dante's 'Inferno.' How these highly imaginative studies must have unconsciously colored and given a direction to her ideas is easily intelligible. That her childhood was not a bright one is undoubted—delicate health and solitariness must have developed a condition which, in a less strong mind, would have been dangerously morbid; and it is a fortunate circumstance that she so early threw herself, heart and soul, into her art, Her first appearance was made at Richmond as *Juliet*, in the summer of 1833, while she was yet scarcely the age of Shakspere's *Juliet.* It was brought about thus. One hot afternoon the sisters went in at the stage door of the theatre, seeking shelter from the sun; and, finding the place untenanted, held a sort of half ludicrous rehearsal of the Balcony Scene; Helen speaking *Juliet's* lines. The manager, Mr. Willis Jones, was, unknown to the performers, a witness of their frolic, and he was so struck by the *Juliet's* fine voice, excellent appearance, and admirable recitation, that he prevailed upon her friends to allow her to appear on his stage, announced only as A Young Lady. She accordingly played several times, with great success;

but the strain was too great for one so young ; and it was thought advisable that she should return to her studies for some considerable time.

On Jan. 5, 1836, she made her first appearance as an actress. Covent Garden Theatre was chosen as the scene of her *début*, and she selected *Juliet* as her character ; but as there was a difficulty in casting the play, she had to give up her favorite heroine, and make her first appearance as *Julia* in the 'Hunchback,' a part which she did not like. However, in spite of terrible nervousness in the first act, she made so unmistakable a success that next morning an agreement was signed with Osbaldiston, the manager, by which she was engaged for a period of three years as leading actress of the theatre. Thus at a single step she reached the highest rank in her profession, gaining her position by no extraneous aid, by none of the artifices of puffing, by no underhand influence, simply taking the place which her powers entitled her to hold. What makes her success more remarkable is the fact that all her impersonations were the result of original study. She had not had the advantage—or disadvantage—of having seen previous interpreters of Shakspere's heroines, and she was wholly ignorant of the traditions of the stage. All her conceptions were her own ; and in her own way she struggled to express what her keen insight showed her of the soul of the character. Thus there was a freshness in her acting which was as rare as it was charming. Mr. Percival Farren, elder brother of the celebrated William Farren, was her first master ; and of him and his kindly care she writes with warm affection and appreciation.

In her first season she had the incalculable benefit

of the advice and help of Charles Kemble ; and she gratefully acknowledges how fortunate it was that, to one of her shy and sensitive nature, so sympathetic an instructor was given. Her next adviser was Macready, by whom she was engaged when he became lessee of Covent Garden in 1837, and with whom she had acted while he was in Osbaldiston's company at Covent Garden during 1836. As a guide he was the very opposite of Charles Kemble, being a severe disciplinarian, very dogmatic, and very opinionated. Miss Faucit says that, " My dear, you are entirely wrong in this conception," was a constant phrase of his, and there is no doubt that he might have done much to retard the young actress's progress, and to make her lose interest in her profession, had not his depressing influence been counteracted by the kindness and appreciation of Mr. Elton, an excellent actor, who was her constant and admiring friend, and by the sympathetic encouragement of the best critics of the day and the enthusiasm of her audiences. Her training under Macready was strict and exacting. For a new play, or a revival, he had rehearsals daily for three, four or five weeks, and these usually lasted from ten in the morning till three or four in the afternoon. With this strict but valuable taskmaster she played at Covent Garden, the Haymarket and Drury Lane ; remaining with him until he resigned his management of the last of these in 1843. During the seven years of her connection with the three chief London theatres she had played *Juliet*, *Beatrice*, *Constance*, *Imogene*, *Cordelia*, *Desdemona*, *Miranda*, *Rosalind*, *Katherine*, *Hermione* and other leading characters in the poetical drama, such as *Mrs. Haller* and *Mrs.*

Beverley. She had been the original representative of *Pauline*, *Julie de Mortemar*, *Clara Douglas* ('Money'), the *Duchess de la Vallière*, *Countess of Carlisle*, in Browning's 'Strafford,' *Mildred Tresham* in the same author's 'Blot in the 'Scutcheon,' *Margaret* in Joanna Baillie's 'Separation,' *Mabel* in Westland Marston's 'Patrician's Daughter,' *Nina Sforza* in Troughton's tragedy of that name, *Marie de Méranie* in Marston's tragedy of 'Philip of France and Marie de Méranie,' and many others whose interest was transitory. Macready's retirement from London management was a severe blow to Miss Faucit; for, though the labor had been heavy, the pleasure and benefit she derived from acting with a manager of such high aims and great ability, had more than compensated her for it. In one respect, however, it was a benefit; for her separation from Macready enabled her to shake off some mannerisms which constant association with him had almost forced upon her.

From this time she acted much in the provinces. Her friends considered that there she would receive the best practice; so she declined numerous engagements offered her in London, and began, at Edinburgh, a series of triumphantly successful engagements,—so successful that she chronicles, with just pride, that after her first night in Edinburgh, she never played, there or elsewhere, to an indifferent house. That she never, after this time, was permanently established in London, is a painful proof of the degradation of public taste; but she appeared as a star at frequent intervals, finding no diminution of her personal success, and showing ever-increasing ripeness of judgment and powers.

One of her greatest triumphs was won in Paris, whither she went in December, 1844, to act with Macready at the Salle Ventadour in a series of English plays. She appeared on Dec. 16 as *Desdemona;* and during the month which the engagement lasted played also *Ophelia*, *Lady Macbeth*, *Juliet*, and *Virginia.* Her acting was received by the most celebrated French critics with praise so unqualified that its expression might seem hyperbolical were it not so obviously sincere. They were particularly surprised and delighted with an actress who played such widely different characters as *Juliet*, *Ophelia*, and *Lady Macbeth*, sinking her own personality and giving a marked individuality to each. Mitchell, of Bond street, whose speculation this adventure was, was anxious that Miss Faucit should renew her engagement without Macready; but this was impossible, as the theatre could not be obtained for a longer period. It is not a little curious that these triumphs should have been won in a series of plays which were chosen by Macready, and which were, with the single exception of 'Romeo and Juliet' (selected by Mr. Mitchell for his benefit), plays in which Miss Faucit had not been specially studied. Another triumph in her art was gained in Dublin, where she played *Antigone* in March, 1845, and was presented with a congratulatory address by the Royal Irish Academy, accompanied by a golden fibula of great beauty and value, designed by Sir Frederic Burton, now director of the London National Gallery.

On August 25, 1851, she was married to Theodore Martin (now Sir Theodore Martin, K.C.B.), the well-known poet, the coadjutor of Aytoun in the 'Bon

Gaultier Ballads,' and the biographer of Aytoun, the Prince Consort, and Lord Lyndhurst. One of Helen Faucit's most charming characters was *Iolanthe*, in her husband's version of Hertz's drama, 'King Réné's Daughter.' Not having lost her love for her art, she continued, after her marriage, to appear from time to time for brief periods. Lady Martin has taken no formal leave of the stage, though for some years past she has only appeared for benefits, or for charitable objects. Her last appearances have been at Stratford, in April, 1879, when she played *Beatrice* at the opening of the Shakspere Memorial Theatre, and at Manchester in October of the same year, when she generously played *Rosalind* for the benefit of the widow of Charles Calvert.

The quality which, above all others, made Helen Faucit famous, and to which all others were subordinate, was the vividness with which she realized her characters. To her, *Juliet, Rosalind, Desdemona* were real personages : she was not satisfied with the study of their emotions, as they were stirred in the play; she sought, in every line of their speech, in every thought they gave utterance to, in every allusion to them by others, clues to enable her to understand their previous history and the influences that had moulded their character. She was not an actress, playing a part, so much as a woman, realizing in the abstract the joys and sufferings of her sex. *Juliet's* horror of the tomb was a most real terror to Helen Faucit ; *Desdemona's* death under a cloud of dishonor was an acute agony, as if it had been her own ; while, on the other hand, *Rosalind's* joyousness of successful love thrilled her with keenest transport. She worked from the soul

outwards, as all great artists must; and her strong realization of her characters, and her own belief in their reality, impressed her audience as no merely technical ability could have done. To clear understanding and vivid power of realization she added unwearied study. Although her early essays were received by her audiences, as well as by her critics, with great favor, she was herself conscious that it was only by unfaltering application that she could attain to higher ideals, to juster conceptions. And with the expansion of the mental grasp must come cultivation of the art which gives expression to the idea. So she worked constantly, never satisfied with her attainments; always struggling to feel her part more keenly, to express her emotions more vividly. No point was trifling or unimportant to her that aided to elucidate any phase of character, or to bring the audience into touch with the play. Thus, in the 'Lady of Lyons' she was never without flowers, because she felt that *Pauline* loved them passionately; and in 'Romeo and Juliet' she attached so much importance to the effect of the Prologue on the audience, that, when playing *Juliet* at Drury Lane, in 1869, she used to speak it herself, with a silk domino thrown over her dress, no one else being inclined to undertake the task.

This intense absorption in a character has of necessity its limitation. An actress of vulgar mind, of ignoble feelings, might be a very good *Moll Flaggon;* but she could not identify herself with the dainty *Rosalind,* or enter into the feelings of *Juliet.* And here the delicacy of Helen Faucit's nature was her truest aid. The distinguishing characteristic of her

acting was womanliness, and whether she expressed the tragic love of *Juliet*, or the happy, light-hearted affection of *Rosalind*, she portrayed a passion deep and strong, yet full of reserve and modesty. With all that was purest and best in woman she was in closest sympathy,—a gift of inexpressible value to a tragic actress; for without it, fire and passion, strength of mind, power of expression, are mere externals, which may force admiration but cannot inspire sympathy. Holding the highest views of the dignity and aims of her art, she has won, both in her public career, and her private life, universal respect and admiration.

ROBERT W. LOWE.

Her form is graceful, her eyes have a beaming softness, and her features though not of the Greek or Roman cast may be considered striking and agreeable. Her voice is confined in compass, but rich in tone, and will by prudent management, judicious modulation and some study become eminently delightful. Her great excellence at present [1844] is exhibited in characters of tenderness. . . . . The effect of her acting in such parts is always pleasing and generally deeply pathetic. She has the tact, as it were, of identifying herself with the character, and breathes forth a pure, artless strain of feeling which rivets the mind of the spectator to the scene.

MRS. C. BARON WILSON: 'Our Actresses,' *vol. ii., p.* 20.

Jan. 8, 1845.—Acted *Macbeth* with effort, not so

well as Monday, but I think with power and discrimination. The audience applauded Miss Faucit's sleeping scene much more than anything else in the whole play.

WM. C. MACREADY : 'Diary.'

Jan. 16, 1845. — Miss Faucit acted in 'Hamlet' before King Louis Philippe and the French Court at the Tuileries, and was by the king presented with a costly bracelet. The same year, in March, after playing *Antigone* in Dublin, she was presented with the following address by members of the Royal Irish Academy and the Society of Ancient Art :

"Madam,—We beg to give expression to the unalloyed and sustained satisfaction which we have derived from your late performance at our national theatre.

"We have each and all endeavored to promote the cultivation of classic literature and the study of ancient Art in this our city ; and we feel that your noble representation of *Antigone* has greatly advanced these important objects, by creating a love and admiration of the beauty and grandeur of Ancient Greece.

"With the writings of the Grecian dramatists it is true we have been long familiar, but their power and their beauty have come down to us through books alone. 'Mute and motionless' that Drama has heretofore stood before us. You, madam, have given it voice, gesture, and life ; you have realized the genius, and embodied the inspiration of the authors and artists of Early Greece, and have thus encouraged and instructed the youth of Ireland in the study of their immortal books.

"We offer the accompanying testimonial to the virtues and talents of one whose tastes, education, and surpassing powers have justly placed her at the summit of her profession.

(Signed)

George Petrie, R.H.A., V.P.R.I.A., Chairman.

John Anster, LL.D., } Secretaries."
John Francis Waller, }

Accompanying this testimonial was a splendid brooch of Irish gold, nearly four inches in diameter, designed by F. W. Burton, R.H.A. In the centre was a medallion exhibiting the figure of Antigone crouching in grief over the funeral urn of Polynices. The success of Miss Faucit's personation of the 'Antigone' led to the production for her in Dublin of the 'Iphigenia in Aulis' of Euripides. In 1845, on Nov. 6, Miss Faucit sustained for the first time the part of *Rosalind*, in 'As You Like It,' at the Haymarket Theatre.

CHARLES EYRE PASCOE: the 'Dramatic List,' Helen Faucit.

Miss Faucit's acting is the perfection of pathos. She has the art of giving to simple words and sentences a world of meaning,—of appealing directly to the heart,—of opening the deepest depths of feeling. . . . . There are many other examples easily referrable, of a feeling infused—a depth of passion—of almost unutterable human love, constituting the power she possesses of rousing those sympathies which men need not be ashamed of, though their eyes dim with tears.

Tallis's Dramatic Magazine, December, 1850.

In its tenderness and grace of womanhood; in the simple piety that looks to the gods when *Imogen* commits herself to rest, or is about to read a letter from her husband; in the wife's absolute love and perfect innocence, void of false shame, slow to believe ill, strong to resist it, Miss Faucit's *Imogen* [in 'Cymbeline,' at Drury Lane] is eloquent to our eyes, even when she fails now and then to satisfy our ears. She is an actress trained in the school of the Kembles, careful to make every gesture an embodiment of thought,—too careful sometimes, as when, after the cry, "What! ho, *Pisanio!*" she remains with upraised arm throughout half the speech of *Iachimo* that begins "Oh, happy *Leonatus!*" There is a graver fault of excess in the first part of representation of womanly fear when as *Fidele* she calls at the mouth of the unoccupied cavern and runs from the sound herself has made.

HENRY MORLEY: 'Journal of a London Playgoer,' Nov. 5, 1864.

On Wednesday, Miss Faucit played *Rosalind* in 'As You Like It.' . . . . In all the scenes with *Orlando* Miss Faucit's acting is delightful. If she has not the art to conceal art, the art she does not conceal is true,—is founded on quick and refined perception of the poetry she is interpreting. She can realize line by line, with tone and gesture more of the spiritual grace and beauty of true poetry than any lady who now acts upon the English stage.

Ibid., Dec. 17, 1865.

I believe, myself, that Shakspere wrote the part of

Rosalind, in a prophetic dream, for Helen Faucit. I will not call her Miss, and I will not call her Mrs. Martin. There never can have been such another. She is all *Rosalind.* The sweet, round voice, the statuesque and gracious attitudes, the perfect tenderness of conception, and the sustained tone of the *grand dame de par le monde*, as Brantôme has it, who never forgets her royalty for a moment in the lovely garnish of a boy, all these things go together to make a thing to be remembered of Helen Faucit's *Rosalind.*

HERMAN MERIVALE, in the *Theatre*, November, 1879.

Macready achieved renown in the Roman citizen *Virginius*, but damaged his reputation by attempting *Coriolanus. Macbeth* was his best part in Shakspere; but he shone with conspicuous splendor as manager and actor in 'Cymbeline,' cast in unprecedented strength, marvelously mounted and acted to admiration. The *Imogene* of Helen Faucit, now Lady Theodore Martin, in delicacy of conception and power of execution soared high above criticism; while Macready's *Iachimo*, whether as the rose-crowned boaster in Rome, the plainly-attired "noble stranger" in Britain where his eager gallantry is chilled by the presence of the chaste *Imogen*, or the repentant soldier after the battle in classic pose, action, and utterance, exhibited the actor's art to perfection.

WALTER LACY, in the 'Green-Room,' Christmas. 1880.

Helen Faucit's personation of character was a gift. Indignation, irony, scorn, tenderness, affection, and

sorrow were depicted by her in the most natural manner, and she had the advantage of a grand presence, great flexibility, clearness, and mellowness of voice, somewhat of a low pitch, but very distinct, with a passionate expression ; any one could see that she felt the part she played, whatever it was. . . . . .

I saw Helen Faucit in very many of her characters, but her *Lady Constance* was my beau-ideal of a tragic actress, and I thought she could not equal it until I saw her in the 'Lady of Lyons,' some time afterwards. . . . . .

Throughout the last act, when *Pauline* is about to be sacrificed to *Beauséant* to save her father's fortune, and *Melnotte*, as *Colonel Morler*, under a feigned name, is talking to her about the absent *Melnotte* (as she supposes), Helen Faucit's acting was very fine ; and after two years and a half one has a right to suppose that she would prefer *Melnotte* to *Beauséant*, a man whom she hated and despised ; when the *dénouement* came, and *Morler* turns out to be her own husband, her surprise and joy were so real and natural that one would imagine it to be like what any one would be at coming back from the dead. The acting was a great triumph, without exaggeration. The drawback to the play is that *Melnotte* is rather a bore and preaches too much ; as even at the end, when he has a great deal to repent of in reality for all the misery he has caused, he gives himself rather a good character than otherwise—like Zacchæus extolling himself from the sycamore-tree—and walks off with the honors of war. There can be no doubt that Helen Faucit made the success of the 'Lady of Lyons' by her creation of a very difficult character ; and the great compliment to such creation

is that the ambition of every new star on the stage is to play *Pauline* to a London audience (who are very particular about the old traditions), and many have made the attempt with varied results.

Cornhill Magazine, September, 1885.

She was the original *Pauline* in Bulwer's 'Lady of Lyons': that one part alone was enough to make any actress; and the position she thus acquired was confirmed by several other original parts in new plays—*Clara Douglas* in 'Money,' *Nina Sforza*, etc.—in all of which she had the advantage of Mr. Macready's tuition, and the disadvantage of his manner being, by example and contagion, ingrafted on her style, which, in other respects, is refined, highly intelligent and marked with a winning feminine softness. I have played with her in later years at Manchester and Dublin; and though she is perhaps somewhat exacting, yet I have always felt it a great pleasure to act with her. Her expression of love is the most beautifully confiding, trustful, self-abandoning in its tone, that I have ever witnessed in any actress; it is intensely fascinating.

GEORGE VANDENHOFF: 'Leaves from an Actor's Note Book,' *chap.* 3, *p.* 42.

Playgoers who remember Helen Faucit, especially in parts like *Rosalind*, will remember how perfectly that fine actress can represent the joyous playfulness of young animal spirits, without once ceasing to be poetical.

GEORGE HENRY LEWES: 'On Actors and the Art of Acting,' *chap.* 11, *p.* 148.

Beloved, whose life is with mine own entwined—
In whom, while yet thou wert my dream, I viewed,
Warm with the life of breathing womanhood,
What Shakspere's visionary eye divined:
Pure *Imogen*, high-hearted *Rosalind*,
Kindling with sunshine all the dusk green wood;
Or changing with the poet's changing mood,
Juliet, and *Constance* of the queenly mind;
I give this book to thee, whose daily life
With that full pulse of noblest feeling glows,
Which lent its spell to thy so potent art;
To thee whose every act, my own true wife,
To grace serene and heavenward spirit shows
That rooted Beatrice in Dante's heart.

THEODORE MARTIN.

FREDERICK ROBSON.

1821—1864.

The Yellow Dwarf young Robson rode so cleverly

* * * * *

And little Robson's left to say,
"The boy in yellow wins the day."

J. R. Planché.

FREDERICK ROBSON.

"The little man is undoubtedly the Great Fact at the Olympic." With these words Henry Morley, in his 'Journal of a London Playgoer,' concludes his notice of the opening performance of the Wigan management at the Olympic Theatre on Oct. 17, 1853: and "the Great Fact at the Olympic," Frederick Robson, continued to be until his death, eleven years afterwards. Previous to his *début* at the Olympic, nearly seven months before that eventful night, his career had been that of the average country low comedian. From that evening he took and maintained a position unique in the history of the London stage.

Thomas Robson Brownbill was born at Margate in 1821. Even in infancy he betrayed the histrionic instinct which was to blossom forth into genius, that in the opinion of many among his contemporaries, would have made him, had he chosen, the legitimate successor to the throne Kean had left vacant. Oddly enough, too, it was chiefly as an imitator of Kean that he made his first infantine successes.

His friends, to crush a tendency of which they disapproved, apprenticed him to the only other calling he thought endurable—that of a copper-plate engraver; and in 1836, at the age of 15, he was articled to a Mr.

Smellie, in the neighborhood of Covent Garden. But though "little Brownbill" stuck manfully to his burin by day, his nights were passed in the more congenial atmosphere of the amateur theatres, of which there were at that time several in the neighborhood of the Strand. It is on record that his first real trial appearance was at the amateur theatre in Catherine Street, Strand, as *Simon Mealbag* in the domestic drama of 'Grace Huntley.' He had to pay for the privilege of performing and apparently met with small success. No date is assigned for this event, but it was probably after his term of apprenticeship had expired. This was shortened from seven to four years by the retirement of his master; and for the space of a twelvemonth he carried on business as an engraver in Brydges Street, Covent Garden, without, however, ceasing to play as an amateur. Finally, being now twenty years of age, he packed up his tools, which he preserved with affection for the rest of his life, and changing his name to Frederick Robson, betook himself to the stage, for which he was born and which he so greatly adorned.

His first engagement was as Second Utility in a room at Whitstable, in Kent. While there he acquired that command of the Kentish dialect which stood him in such stead in playing *Daddy Hardacre*, *Simon Burr* and similar parts. He is then heard of at Uxbridge and other small places, and finally at Glasgow, whence he went to London, appearing for a short time at the City of London Theatre. Early in 1844 he accepted an engagement at the Grecian Saloon Theatre, in the City Road, appearing in the old farce of the 'Illustrious Stranger.' "His success," says an eye-witness, "was

immediate and complete." Here he remained for more than five years playing in many of those farces, the 'Wandering Minstrel,' 'Boots at the Swan,' the 'Lottery Ticket,' and the like, which he afterwards made famous at the Olympic.

After the plays were over a miscellaneous concert was given in one of the large saloons attached to the grounds, and here 'Villikins and his Dinah,' and the 'Country Fair'—which afterwards kept two farces alive at the Olympic for nearly a twelvemonth—were often heard between eleven o'clock and midnight. He left the Grecian in 1850, and went to the Queen's Theatre, Dublin, in which city and in Belfast he played with great success for two or three years, until through some unlucky accident a misunderstanding arose between him and his audience. Though an apology was made, and he was allowed to appear again, he was received coldly and acted with evident nervousness. He left shortly afterwards, and returned to London.

And now the tide of his affairs began to flow, to ebb only with his life. On March 28, 1853, being then thirty-two years of age, he made his *début* at the theatre which was to be the scene of all his triumphs, —the Olympic, in Wych Street, then under the management of Mr. William Farren, first and greatest of that name. The part was the *Captain of Musketeers*, in a piece called 'Salvatore.' Robson seems to have done all that was possible with it, and secured a line in the brief notice in the *Times* for his impersonation of "the amusing poltroon."

Mr. G. A. Sala, in his sketch of Robson's career, asserts that a weary period elapsed between his appearance and his realization of financial success. But

though he speaks with a certain authority as having known "the great little man" in the flesh, yet his statement seems to be contradicted by the fact that in the advertisement of the farce of 'Catching an Heiress,' which was produced on April 14, to "stiffen the bill," Robson is "starred" as *Tom Twig;* and this is a distinction not usually conferred on an actor whose name is not an attraction ; in addition to which undeniable fact I have it on very good authority that, during the run of 'Plot and Passion,' only seven months after his first appearance at the Olympic, he was in receipt of a salary of £30 per week.

On April 25 Frank Talfourd's burlesque of 'Macbeth' was produced. In this he played the chief character,—as a red-headed, fire-eating, whiskey-drinking Scotchman,—and his tragi-comic style burst upon the town with all the force of a new creation. Never before had been seen such a strange compound of passion, humor, pathos, and eccentricity. The *Times*, in the course of a long and highly eulogistic criticism of the impersonation, said : "It belongs to no recognized school of burlesque acting, but is an original creation : His acting is more than promising." Again, in apparent contradiction of Mr. Sala's statement, I note that extracts from this notice were printed daily in the advertisement of the theatre,—a rare thing in those unsophisticated and pre-Barnumite days,—and Robson's name was "starred" not only in this, but in every subsequent impersonation while Mr. Farren was in power.

On May 23 the 'Wandering Minstrel' was added to the bill, and *Jem Baggs*, with his inimitable ditty of 'Villikins and his Dinah,' made his bow to an

Olympic audience, and continued in frequent revivals one of Robson's most popular characters. This established his reputation as a great and original actor, and thenceforward all London went to see Robson. On July 4 he renewed his burlesque triumph by playing *Shylock*, in F. Talfourd's burlesque, the 'Merchant of Venice Preserved.' Again the *Times* greets him with enthusiasm: "He adheres to the principle—eminently his own—of grounding his eccentricities on a really tragic basis;" and the following paragraph was quoted in the advertisements during the run: "His impersonations belong to the histrionic phenomena of the day." On August 6 he played another of his Grecian successes, *Jacob Earwig*, in 'Boots at the Swan,' and this and *Shylock* ran, with the exception of one night, until, on Sept. 23, the season and Mr. Farren's management of the Olympic closed together. The night excepted was the first benefit here of Frederick Robson, on Sept 15, the bill consisting of 'Exchange no Robbery,' 'Merchant of Venice Preserved,' and the 'Mistaken Story.' In accordance with the usual custom, it is probable that the beneficiary appeared in all these pieces, though with the exception of *Shylock*, I cannot ascertain what characters he sustained.

On Oct. 17, 1853, Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Wigan undertook the management of the Olympic, and opened it with a little *pièce d'occasion*, written for them by J. R. Planché, called the 'Camp at the Olympic,' in which Robson, whom they had wisely retained on the staff of the theatre, was cast with singular appropriateness for the *Spirit of Burlesque;* and Tom Taylor's drama, 'Plot and Passion,' wherein

he created the part of *Desmarets* and made *the* triumph of the evening, being hailed as a new and original artist, who need not fear comparison with Bouffé.

Throughout the season of 1853–4 he continued constantly in the bill, playing mostly in one-act farces, revived or written for the exhibition of his rare faculty of combining tragic passion and hints of the terrible with ludicrous burlesque. On Dec. 26, 1854, he created the *Yellow Dwarf* in Planché's extravaganza of that name; and this is probably the personation by which he will best be remembered. His appearance as a minute figure, yellow from head to foot, was that of a demon whom Retsch might have loved to portray; while his acting, which kept the audience in a tumult of delight, showed a mastery of the grotesque which bordered on the terrible. Mr. Planché in the preface to the 'Yellow Dwarf,' ('Extravaganzas,' vol. v.,) pays an eloquent tribute to the genius of the actor whose peculiar power for what might be called passionate burlesque he so keenly appreciated and so dexterously utilized :—

"In Mr. Robson I thought I saw such a representative of the *Dwarf* as I might never see again, and I was not mistaken. So powerful was his personation of the cunning, the malignity, the passion and despair of the monster, that he elevated extravaganza into tragedy. His delivery of the lines, slightly parodied from the wail of *Othello* over the dead body of *Desdemona*, moved Thackeray, 'albeit unused to the melting mood,' almost to tears. 'This is not a burlesque,' he exclaimed, 'it is an idyl!'" More farces followed, always with the same laudatory comments from the press and enthusiastic endorsement from the

public. On June 22, 1855, he made his first and, so far as I can ascertain, only appearance on the London stage in the legitimate drama, playing *Moses* in the 'School for Scandal,' a performance remarkable for the genius bestowed on the illustration of a subordinate character, by which it was lifted at once out of the category of small parts. Another critic calls Robson a sort of Admirable Crichton of the stage; he can apparently do everything—a result owing, no doubt, to the length of time during which he was matriculating in the provinces and in suburban theatres attempting all manner of business.

On Dec. 26, 1855, he played as usual the principal part—*Prince Richcraft* in Planché's extravaganza, the 'Discreet Princess': and on July 14, 1856, another of his great burlesque parts, *Medea*—in which Ristori was not caricatured so much as emulated—first saw the footlights. No praise seems to have been too lavish for the eye-witnesses of this "marvelous picture of what we may call tragedy off stilts." The original *Medea*, the great Ristori herself, went to see Robson and was delighted with and amazed at him. During this autumn he had the first attack of the illness destined to interfere so seriously with the sequence of triumphs which constituted his remarkable and only too brief career. On Oct. 27, Mr. Morley notes, "Mr. Robson, after a season of illness has reappeared, in his wonderful burlesque of *Medea*, wherein he seems to have reached the climax of success in personating jealousy by a wild mingling of the terrible with the grotesque."

On Nov. 24, a new farce, 'Jones the Avenger,' afforded him one or two fine opportunities of burlesquing tragic passion; and he awakened laughter by combining

ludicrous ideas, with the display of a passion as real as *Macbeth's*. The Christmas extravaganza, 'Young and Handsome,' was again from the pen of Mr. Planché. Robson's part was rather out of his usual line, though he did not fail to distinguish himself in it. The *Athenæum* praised his performance of the air-god *Zephyr*, "a new kind of character, where lightness and whim are substituted for the broad burlesque and tragic farce in which he is usually made conspicuous. We are pleased by the change and gratified by the evidence it affords of true versatility of the comedian."

On March 28, 1857, was produced for the first time *Daddy Hardacre*, a skillful adaptation of the 'Fille de l'Avare,' and Robson was tremendous in the leading part, dexterously founded on the usurer in Balzac's 'Eugénie Grandet.'

His next assumption was the part of *Masaniello* in Robert Brough's burlesque of that name. "Here he had an opportunity—which some thought would prove a magnificent one to him, of showing the grotesque side of insanity; but for some reason or other, the part seemed distasteful to him. It may have been repugnant to his eminently sensitive spirit to exhibit the ludicrous aspect of the most dreadful of human infirmities; perhaps the piece was weak. At all events in the crazy Neapolitan fisherman he either failed or was unwilling to excel." Notwithstanding this verdict of Mr. Sala, 'Masaniello' ran from the date of its production, July 2, until the closing of the Wigan management in August; and when the theatre reopened on August 10, under the management of Messrs. Frederick Robson and Emden, 'Masaniello'

again figured in the bill together with the 'Lighthouse' by Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens. This play had been first produced at Campden House by the Guild of Literature and Art, and Mr. Henry Morley draws a very interesting comparison between Robson's performance of *Aaron Gurnock* and Mr. Dickens's to the distinct disadvantage of the former, and concludes: "I believe the truth to be that Mr. Robson is most perfectly at home, and can be seen to the best advantage in those parts by which his reputation has been made; and that his success in parts of serious interest will be greatest in those which, like *Daddy Hardacre*, permit him to add to his strokes of passion some fantastic touches that provoke us unexpectedly to mirth. . . . . Full of interest, full of fine touches of the artist's power, is Mr. Robson's personation of the part, but it is not one of his triumphs." A revival of 'Boots at the Swan' led Mr. Morley to contrast his *Jacob Earwig* with Mr. Keeley's: "Mr. Robson, although deaf, is humorously wide awake. He is the *Boots* who is brisk, and alive in all the humor of the street, who would be preternaturally knowing if he could but hear what people say. In word, look and action he is more the gamin than the simpleton."

The Christmas piece calls for no comment; but on March 8, 1858, he made another distinct success as *Griggs* in J. Madison Morton's farce 'Ticklish Times.' In October a melodrama by Wilkie Collins was produced, but the 'Red Vial' was condemned in spite of the fact that Robson and Mrs. Stirling raised the story to the utmost possible height by their acting.

On Dec. 4, was produced John Oxenford's 'Porter's Knot,' in which Robson created his character of

Sampson Burr with distinguished success. He felt his opportunity, and accordingly elaborated it with a minuteness and a finish that made it one of the finest and most complete of his assumptions. A distinguished critic calls it, "a piece of acting not less perfect in its truth and its quaint mingling of comedy with pathos than his *Daddy Hardacre*. There is the same rustic dialect and manner, but there ends all likeness between the two characters, except the perfect way in which each is expressed. *Sampson Burr's* trouble in his chimney corner, or his talk with his wife when she has brought his dinner to the pier, and they sit together on the truck while he is eating it, cannot be seen without an emotion expressed either by laughter or by tears." On Dec. 26, the customary Christmas piece was produced, 'Mazeppa,' with Robson in the title part; and early in the new year—1859—he attempted to play the 'Porter's Knot' with it, but the strain was too great and resulted in another attack of illness. He continued throughout this season to play in farces, old and new, and after a brief revival of 'Medea' in November, produced 'Alfred the Great' as a Christmas attraction.

On March 12, 1860, he played *Uncle Zachary*, in which he entered into manifest rivalry with M. Bouffé, the original representative of the part—*l'oncle Baptiste* —and more than satisfied critical comparison. No small feat, when one remembers that George Henry Lewes was writing, "that no one ventures to dispute, that our drama is extinct as a literature, and our stage is in a deplorable condition of decline," and with the lament, "that the critic's office is somewhat of a sinecure just now in London," turned to

France for dramatic work worthy of his consideration.

The farce of 'B. B.' followed, adding another to the number of remarkable successes by which his career at the small house in Wych Street was distinguished. On July 2, the *Shylock* burlesque having been revived for his benefit in the previous week, was installed in the evening bill.

On October 5, he undertook the part of *Hugh de Brass* in 'A Regular Fix;' and on Nov. 17, played the farce of 'B. B.' by royal command, before the Queen, at Windsor Castle. In the Christmas burlesque 'Timour the Tartar,' Robson was but moderately well fitted with his part; still, it fulfilled its purpose and ran until early in the new year, when the 'Chimney Corner' was produced, another of the little domestic dramas written expressly and deliberately to his measure and capacity. He was absent from the bill through illness from May 20 until after the summer vacation; when he reappeared on Sept. 23 as *Tom Twigg*, in a revival of his first Olympic success, 'Catching an Heiress.' Illness again drove him from the stage. On Oct. 28, he reappeared in a new farce by John Oxenford, 'A Legal Impediment,' and was received with the most cordial and prolonged applause, which evoked from him a quiet "God bless you!" The whole value of the farce consisted in the abundant opportunity it gave Robson to be droll in his own way. He played the out-door man of a firm of griping lawyers, pinched himself, and bespattered with mud of the streets, where he had caught, in spite of his little camlet cloak, a permanent cold that allowed him to get no further in the announcement of his own name, *Slush*,

than H'ush. Mistaken for a better man in eccentric disguise, Mr. H'ush was invited to make himself at home over the fruit and wine of a city man's dessert; and he did make himself at home. Robson's toasts and sentiments, his sentimental song, his disgust and astonishment on getting an olive into his mouth,—"they looks like gooseberries and they tastes like periwinkles,"—all formed a thoroughly farcical and characteristically Robsonian performance and gave occasion for uproarious mirth. Another farce, 'Sporting Intelligence,' followed on Dec. 17, and on the 28th of the same month the Christmas burlesque, the 'King of the Merrows,' in which Robson played *Dan the Piper*.

His repeated indisposition now became a subject of grave concern to his numerous admirers; but on Feb. 24, 1862, he appeared in a new character, and never acted better. This was *Abel Melford*, the old property man, in 'A Fairy's Father.' An Easter burlesque, 'Fair Rosamond,' was given on April 21, in which he made *Queen Ellinor* a sort of grotesque *Lady Macbeth*, and quite one of the best things he had done since *Medea*. In June he was again too ill to act, but on July 7 he reappeared in a revival of the 'Porter's Knot.' During the remainder of that season and the early part of next, revivals of his old successes allowed him a fair amount of rest; and on Nov. 10 he appeared, with much of his old power, as *Dogbriar*, the traveling tinker, in Watts Phillips's 'Camilla's Husband.'

This was the last new part which he created, and soon after this the attacks of his malady became more frequent, and his performances so fitful and uncertain that he may be said to have practically retired

from the London stage. He expired of laryngeal consumption, at the early age of forty-three, on Aug. 12, 1864, "depriving the stage," says Planché, "of an actor who, had his physical powers been equal to his mental capacity, might have succeeded Edmund Kean in *Richard III.*, *Othello*, and *Sir Giles Overreach*, without fear of comparison."

His small size has been frequently alluded to; but, judging by his portraits, he was a well-looking little man, and the account given above of his performance of *Prince Zephyr* shows that he was by no means destitute of grace and elegance.

No career recorded in the tragic pages of the history of Genius seems to me more pathetic than this of Frederick Robson. Goaded by the irresistible impulse of that fatal gift to the exercise of an art, the first condition of which—its publicity—must have been a continual torture to a man of his exquisite sensibility; wrestling from the first with a painful disease; feeding it perforce with the stimulants which were necessary to carry him through the almost superhuman exertions demanded of him by the trying parts he played; stretching himself nightly on the rack that a frivolous world might laugh while it wept over his sufferings, he must have lived as he died, with the touching cry often in his heart, if not on his lips, "Oh, my wasted and unprofitable life." And yet this is not the most tragic point in the history of his martyrdom. With all his stupendous genius he was denied the poor consolation of faith in his own powers. He never could be persuaded to attempt a higher walk of his art than burlesque; though the unanimous voice of contemporary criticism proclaimed

him worthy heir to the throne of Garrick and of Kean. Surely such a man deserves of us the respect and admiration due to one who sacrificed everything, even his life, for his fellow men,—if only for their amusement.

EDW. HAMILTON BELL.

As an illustration of the extreme length to which prejudice of caste could in those days affect an actor, I remember meeting the lessee of the Theatre Royal [Dublin], who inquired if I could recommend the name of a comedian I considered sufficiently up to the mark to suit the patrons of his establishment. I thought for a moment and recollected I had recently seen at the Grecian Saloon, in London, a gentleman who would be precisely the person he wanted.

"What's his name?" said the manager.

"Robson," said I.

"Robson," echoed he; "where did you see him?"

"At the Grecian Saloon," I replied.

"Ugh! Wouldn't have him if he'd come for nothing!"

Since the date of the above, Mr. Robson, prior to his death, rose to the highest grade in London, and able reviewers claimed for him a position as an artist second only to Bouffé of the French stage.

WILLIAM DAVIDGE: 'Footlight Flashes,' *chap.* 7.

New triumphs awaited him. In the burlesque of the 'Yellow Dwarf,' he showed a mastery of the grotesque which approached the terrible. Years before, in *Macbeth*, he had personated a red-headed,

fire-eating, whiskey-drinking Scotchman, — and in *Shylock*, a servile, fawning, obsequious, yet, when emergency arose, a passionate and vindictive Jew. In the 'Yellow Dwarf' he was the jaundiced embodiment of a spirit of Oriental evil : crafty, malevolent, greedy, insatiate,—full of mockery, mimicry, lubricity, and spite,—an Afrit, a Djinn, a Ghoul, a spawn of Sheitan. How that monstrous orange-tawny head grinned and wagged ! How those flaps of ears were projected forward, like unto those of a dog ! How balefully those atrabilious eyes glistened ! You laughed, and yet you shuddered. He spoke in mere doggerel and slang. He sang trumpery songs to negro melodies. He danced the Lancashire clog-hornpipe ; he rattled out puns and conundrums ; yet did he contrive to infuse into all this mummery and buffoonery, into his salmagundi of the incongruous and the *outré*, an unmistakably tragic element,—an element of depth and strength and passion, and almost of sublimity. The mountebank became inspired. The Jack Pudding suddenly drew the *cothurnus* over his clogs. You are awe-stricken by the intensity, the vehemence, he threw into the mean balderdash of the burlesque-monger. These qualities were even more apparent in his subsequent personation of *Medea*, in Robert Brough's parody of the Franco-Italian tragedy. The love, the hate, the scorn, of the abandoned wife of *Jason*, the diabolic loathing in which he holds *Creüsa*, the tigerish affection with which she regards the children whom she is afterwards to slay,—all these were portrayed by Robson, through the medium, be it always remembered, of doggerel and slang, with astonishing force and vigor. The original *Medea*, the

great Ristori herself, came to see Robson, and was delighted with and amazed at him. She scarcely understood two words of English, but the actor's genius struck her home through the bull's-hide target of an unknown tongue. "*Uomo straordinario!*" she went away saying.

GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA, in the *Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1864.

Robson was a marvelous little fellow. Full of energy, uneducated, quick as lightning in his appreciation of humor, and sparkling with fun. Restless at rehearsal, going over and over again whatever dissatisfied him, and bothering his fellow-actors by changing his business from day to day until he had hit upon exactly what he was going to do. I have seen him stop during rehearsal and laugh, till the tears rolled down his cheeks, at some ridiculous idea which had struck him. He was never tired; but business bothered him, and luckily for him he had an excellent steady man for a partner in the management, Emden, who had been at one time acting manager to the Wigans.

FRANCIS COWLEY BURNAND, in the Brooklyn *Daily Eagle*, Oct. 25, 1885.

CHARLES FECHTER.

1824—1879.

Romantic Fechter! thou who made us feel
The depth of *Armand's* love for poor *Camille;*
Who victor stood o'er *Pauline's* startled heart
E'en while her pride received the galling dart;—
For thee, fond memory pauses in the race
Of quick events, to mark thy glowing face.
Lover par excellence, and debonair,
What *Ruy Blas* like thine, or *Lagadère?*
The warmth of Italy, the grace of France,
Combined to make thee hero of romance.

WILLIAM L. KEESE.

CHARLES FECHTER.

Genius is no more a matter of accident than the rising of the sun. Though genius dazzle with the unexpected brilliancy of a comet, like a comet it has its regular orbit, and when the science of art is discovered, the world will know the cause as well as the effect of human greatness.

Blood has never told a more straightforward story than in the character of Charles Fechter, in whose ancestors are the beginnings of himself. With artistic proclivities on both sides of the house,—with the hot blood of Italy, the speculative blood of Germany, strongly impregnated with French *verve*, flowing through his veins,—Charles Fechter, though born in London, England, on Oct. 23, 1824, was a man without a country. His art, however, was pre-eminently French, for in 1836 Paris became the home of his parents. For two years Charles was sent to school at Boulogne-sur-Seine, after which, at the age of twelve, the vivacious, imaginative boy returned home to aid in supporting the family by assisting his father in making bronzes and candelabra. Between working hours Fechter studied French with Hersant, his drawing master, read the classics and dreamed of the theatre which he frequented with the constancy of a passionate lover. It is not strange, therefore, that the

youth, destined by his father to be a sculptor, should, as early as 1840, have associated himself with an amateur theatrical company and have made his *début* at the Salle Molière as *jeune premier* in Dumas's 'Mari de la Veuve.' Fechter's success was so great that after his performance, St. Aulaire, Rachel's first instructor, went to him saying: "My boy, if you will come to my *cours* (class), I will teach you for nothing." "And if you make the stage your profession, I will give you all my parts!" added Scribe who, unknown, had witnessed the *début*. Fechter could not accept St. Aulaire's generous offer, his presence being needed in his father's studio, but the bent of nature could not long be thwarted. One year later, the stage-struck youth set off for Florence to play the interesting lovers in Duvernoir's French company. Fechter won praise from the *Sir Hubert Stanleys* of the period, but alas! more glory than shekels fell to the lot of the manager who, at the end of six weeks, called his company together, and dismissed them with little more than his blessing. With characteristic generosity, Fechter divided his share of pence among poorer actors and returned home. To please his father he became a student of the Académie des Beaux Arts, while to please himself he entered the Conservatoire determined to study for the Théâtre Français. At the end of three weeks Fechter left the latter school, disgusted with a régime in which no two professors agreed. Disheartened, he gave up thoughts of the stage and put his best energies into his night work at the Beaux Arts, where in 1844 he was one of the graduating class competing for the first grand medal, which includes the high honor of being sent to Rome

for five years at government expense. Fechter won the prize.

"You must go," said Fechter *père*, dancing with delight.

"It is impossible," answered the son. "My heart is wedded to the theatre."

Then the father learned that Charles had rehearsed before the tribunal of the Théâtre Français and had received a call to make his *début* in *Séide* of Voltaire's 'Mahomet,' and in *Valère* of Molière's 'Tartuffe.' Fechter won his spurs in both tragedy and comedy and gained Rachel's good-will; but human nature is weak, artists are sadly jealous, and perhaps it is not strange that old *sociétaires* looked with ill-favor upon the youth of nineteen who had jumped so suddenly into popularity. Fechter's second *début* in 'Les Horaces' with Rachel, and in 'Le Menteur,' were received with plaudits and the aspirant became a regular member of the Théâtre Français; but though he had a right to a third *début*, with his own selection of parts, this and other rights were denied. Fechter felt that the *sociétaires* never intended to give him fair play; and when in 1846 the salary of every *pensionaire* was raised, his excepted, the intention could not be mistaken. After appealing in vain for justice, Fechter at the end of eighteen months, left the theatre in a glory of indignation. A more politic man would have known better how to overcome his enemies, but wisdom and Fechter were never boon companions.

Fechter's next appearance was at Berlin. After a successful season of nine months he went to London with a troupe of admirable artists, and acted at the St. James's Theatre for four months during the season of

1847. The Queen and Prince Consort were constant attendants. It was then that Fechter became acquainted with Louis Napoleon. "The next time we meet will be in the Tuileries," said Napoleon to the actor on bidding him good-bye.

"That is somewhat doubtful," answered Fechter, "for I really do not intend to be king." "No," replied the man of destiny, "but I intend to be Emperor."

Napoleon's prophecy came to pass.

Fechter made so strong an impression in London that Maddox, manager of the Princess's, offered him £40 a week for three years, if he would appear on the English stage. Fechter was willing, but an engagement at the Paris Ambigu prevented his acceptance. Toward the end of February, 1848, the young actor returned to Paris, made his entrée in a new play 'La Famille Thureau,' only to have his prospects ruined by the Revolution. After twelve nights the Ambigu closed. Fechter solaced himself with shooting and fencing, in both of which he was an expert, until he appeared in the summer of 1848 at the Variéties in 'Oscar XXVIII,' a travesty of royalty on one side and of mad democracy on the other. It was a daring act, but Fechter knew his people and the burlesque drew crowded audiences of reactionists. Later, Fechter fulfilled an engagement at the Théâtre Historique, and in 1849 appeared again at the Ambigu where, in twelve months he created seven characters. 1850 and 1851 were equally divided between the Théâtre Historique and the Porte St. Martin. During this period Fechter created the 'Corsican Brothers,' that ran for one hundred nights. From 1852 to 1858 Fechter was the star of the Vaudeville where the new plays were

produced, where Dumas's 'Dame aux Camélias' ran for three hundred nights, owing quite as much to Fechter's wonderful conception and creation of *Armand Duval*, a secondary character, as to Madame Doche's personation of the heroine. "What can I say of Fechter," wrote Dumas, "that the world does not say and know? He is the most youthful, most ardent, most enthusiastic of artists. . . . . He has the action, the look, the voice of our inmost emotions, of our most frequent passions," etc.

After a brilliant tour in the provinces, followed by a ten months' engagement at the Porte-St.-Martin, Fechter assumed the management of the Odéon with the intention of producing standard plays in a manner heretofore unknown, and on closing his first season of nine months, during which he had brought out 'Tartuffe' with great éclat, he determined that his reopening should mark an era in dramatic art However, on being refused by the French government the right to perform such plays as were the exclusive property of the Théâtre Français, Fechter with his usual hot-headed impetuosity, bade farewell to Paris and crossed over to England where, under Harris's management, he made his *début* at the Princess's in 'Ruy Blas' on Oct. 27, 1860. The novelty of seeing an eminent French actor translated into English, created a profound sensation. *Ruy Blas* became the hero of a hundred nights. Prior to this *début*, Fechter devoted himself for four months to our stern Anglo-Saxon tongue, studying sixteen hours out of the twenty-four. 'Ruy Blas' was followed by the 'Corsican Brothers' and 'Don César de Bazan,' and on March 20, 1861, Fechter first essayed *Hamlet*. It was aiming high, but not

higher than he could attain. Courage is the friendly breeze that ever fills the sails of genius. His conception of the Dane was so thoroughly original as to be the open-sesame to conversation. The actor became a lion; and the tragedy drew London for one hundred and fifteen nights.

Assuming lesseeship of the Lyceum, Fechter appeared in the 'Duke's Motto' on Jan. 10, 1863. For seven months this drama attracted great audiences, and was withdrawn in the full tide of success to make way for 'Bel Demonio.' 'Hamlet' was revived for forty nights, and the autumn season of 1864 opened with Paul Meurice's comedy-drama, the 'King's Butterfly.' The 'Mountebank' and the 'Roadside Inn,' a new version of 'Robert Macaire' followed, and a revival of 'Ruy Blas' brought the summer season of 1865 to a close. The 'Watch Cry,' a drama in three acts, and the 'Master of Ravenswood' occupied the Lyceum stage in September, 1866. Then, after personating *Hamlet* and the *Corsican Brothers* for six weeks, Fechter produced his own drama of 'Rouge et Noir,' founded on 'Thirty Years of a Gambler's Life.' It lived luxuriously for one hundred and fifty nights. Fechter's next great success was in *Claude Melnotte*. After a run of seventy nights, the 'Lady of Lyons' made way for 'No Thoroughfare,' produced at the Adelphi on Nov. 16, 1867, Fechter having relinquished the management of the Lyceum. Fechter's powerful rendering of *Obenreizer* made the drama. Later, Fechter won double laurels for one hundred nights in his clever adaptation of 'Monte Cristo;' after which he appeared in 'Black and White,' the joint work of himself and Wilkie Collins. 1869 saw

Fechter bidding farewell to London and the provinces, prior to his departure for the United States, where an eager public assembled in Niblo's Garden, New York, on Jan. 10, 1870, to witness 'Ruy Blas.' The effect was identical with that produced in London. Fechter's appearance in the 'Duke's Motto' confirmed the public in their enthusiastic admiration. 'Hamlet' produced a sensation. In Boston people went Fechter mad. In New York the new star was admired; in Boston he founded a religion, and there he became manager of a new theatre (the Globe), where art was to receive a new impetus. Alas! Fechter's unhappy temper, inherited from his father, wrecked the fortunes of the Globe in Boston as well as of the Lyceum in New York, built for him by capitalists, but which never knew its creator as manager. Personally, Fechter soon ceased to be popular in the United States, through no one's fault but his own. He ignored or quarrelled with those upon whom his success depended. It was pitiful. *Karl*, in 'Love's Penance,' produced at the Park Theatre, New York, on April 13, 1874, was Fechter's last creation. From that time forward he was content with the *répertoire* that had made him famous. In some towns, especially Boston, he exercised all his old power; in others he was not appreciated. Falling on the ice in 1876, Fechter broke his leg,—a misfortune that made him physically infirm and cast additional gloom upon his career. The end was not long in coming. Appearing publicly by flashes, Fechter sought seclusion on his farm, which he bought in July, 1873, having always said that the farmer was the happiest and most independent of men. To begin

a career in Paris and to end it in the little village of Rockland Centre, Bucks County, Pennsylvania, is as strange a contrast as can well befall a mortal. In an old, unpretentious country house, a few feet from the highway, the ideal stage lover passed the greater part of the last three years of his life in fishing and hunting. Nature could not restore Fechter to health. For years his digestive organs had been impaired; and it was not unusual for his stomach to be distended with gas, causing great suffering and rendering clothing insupportable. Yet, in this condition he enchanted many an audience. Imagination triumphs over matter, but matter has its revenge in the end. Fechter disappointed the public again and again. The public attributed his non-appearance to dissipation. The actor was on the road to the grave, and at six o'clock, on the morning of Aug. 5, 1879, he died in a stupor.

Those of us who believe in Fechter's qualities do not care to remember the blots in the escutcheon. He was a benefactor to dramatic art. Let that fact suffice. *Faiblesse vaut vice* was his life-long motto; and his inherited curse. If nature has endowed us with less waywardness and more self-control than fell to the lot of Charles Albert Fechter, the more reason have we to thank God, and to encircle with charity the memory of an unhappy genius.

"Rest, perturbed spirit."

KATE FIELD.

In melodrama Mr. Fechter acts effectively and without extravagance. He suits action to word with a nicety not usual upon the English stage, and without obtrusion of his art where he is most superficial. Thus, when he says to Mr. Walter Lacy in the last scene, "I was your lacquey, now I am your executioner," by the help of a chair and a drawn sword he places himself—standing in the middle of the stage—in a natural position instantly suggestive of the conventional attitude of the headsman, and draws loud applause. Few melodramatic actors could venture upon such an effect, for the least hardness or clumsiness of manner would make it ridiculous. Mr. Fechter speaks good English, with no more of his own accent than clings usually to an educated Frenchman resident among us.

HENRY MORLEY: 'Journal of a London Playgoer,' Nov. 10, 1860.

CHELTENHAM, Oct. 31, 1861.

. . . . . I do not know how much to touch upon your notice of M. Fechter's performance without seeming to be ill-natured, which I do not wish to be. From the judgment I had formed upon the various critiques I had read, and the descriptions of him I had heard, I could not help thinking that, in your surprise at a foreigner doing so much with a masterpiece of our language, you were betrayed into giving him credit for more than he really could do. I longed to hear what you would say of his attempt at *Othello*. Your remarks do not much differ from what I had expected. Thank you for the copy of the play as interpreted by Fechter. It should not have been published. The

real artist does not pre-engage your opinion by telling you what he is going to draw: if the tree, or rock, or man, or woman do not describe themselves on the canvas, the writing underneath will not persuade us of the resemblance. His views of the subject show him to me to be a clever man, but altogether superficial in his power of investigation. He cannot perceive where the poet gives language to his creations, in his profound knowledge of the human heart, in direct contradiction of the feelings that oppress them. I would not use severe terms, but cannot find a truer word to express my sense of M. Fechter's conceptions, than to confess they appear to me shallow. There is frequent perversion of the author's meaning, and complete blindness as to the emotions of his characters,—*e. g.*, the demission of his lofty nature to bestow a thought upon that miserable thing *Iago*, when his great mind had made itself up to die! To me it was in the worst taste of a small melodramatic theatre.

A friend of mine in Paris, on whose judgment I place great reliance, as I do on yours, in answer to my inquiries, informed me that he was regarded there as a clever melodramatic actor, but *un peu exagéré*. The appreciators of Talma are not likely to be insensible to the merits of a great theatrical artist. But for myself I can only, as you are aware, offer an opinion on the direct points of the case, which the newspapers and M. Fechter's own publication lay before me.

Wm. C. Macready, to Mrs. Pollock, quoted in Macready's 'Reminiscences,' etc., Letters.

His *Hamlet* was one of the very best, and his

Othello one of the very worst I have ever seen. On leaving the theatre after 'Hamlet' I felt once more what a great play it was, with all its faults, and they are gross and numerous. On leaving the theatre after 'Othello' I felt as if my old admiration for this supreme masterpiece of the art had been an exaggeration: all the faults of the play stood out so glaringly, all its beauties were so dimmed and distorted by the acting of every one concerned. It was necessary to recur to Shakspere's pages to recover the old feeling. . . . . Both in *Hamlet* and *Othello* Fechter attempts to be *natural*, and keeps as far away as possible from the conventional declamatory style which is by many mistaken for idealism only because it is unlike reality. His physique enabled him to represent *Hamlet* and his naturalism was artistic. His physique wholly incapacitated him from representing *Othello;* and his naturalism, being mainly determined by his personality, became utter feebleness. . . . . Fechter is lymphatic, delicate, handsome, and with his long flaxen curls, quivering sensitive nostrils, fine eyes and sympathetic voice perfectly represents the graceful prince. His aspect and bearing are such that the eye rests on him with delight. Our sympathies are completely secured. All those scenes which demand the qualities of an accomplished comedian he plays to perfection. Seldom have the scenes with the players, with *Polonius*, with *Horatio*, with *Rosencrantz* and *Guildenstern*, or the quieter monologues been better played; they are touched with so cunning a grace, and a manner so *natural* that the effect is delightful. We not only feel in the presence of an individual, a character, but feel that the individual is

consonant with our previous conception of *Hamlet*, and with the part assigned him in the play. . . . . Physically then we may say that his *Hamlet* is perfectly satisfactory; nor is it intellectually open to more criticism than must always arise in the case of a character which admits of so many readings. It is certainly a fine conception, consonant in general with what the text of Shakspere indicates. It is the nearest approach I have seen to the realization of Goethe's idea, expounded in the celebrated critique in 'Wilhelm Meister' that there is a burden laid on *Hamlet* too heavy for his soul to bear. The refinement, the feminine delicacy, the vacillation of *Hamlet*, are admirably represented: and it is only in the more tragic scenes that we feel any shortcoming. For these scenes he wants the tragedian's *personality;* and once for all let me say that by *personality* I do not simply mean the qualities of voice and person, but the qualities which give the force of animal passion demanded by tragedy, and which can not be *represented* except by a certain animal power. . . . . In general, it may be said that accomplished an actor as Fechter certainly is, he has allowed the acting manager to gain the upper hand. In his desire to be effective by means of small details of business, he has entirely fritted away the great effects of the drama. He has yet to learn the virtue of simplicity; he has yet to learn that tragedy acts through the emotions, and not through the eye; whatever distracts attention from the passion of the scene is fatal. That while his *Hamlet* satisfied the audience by being at once naturally conceived and effectively represented, his *Othello* left the audience perfectly cold, or interested only as by a curiosity, because it

was unnaturally conceived and feebly executed. Had the execution been fine, the false conception would have been forgotten or pardoned.

GEORGE HENRY LEWES: 'On Actors and the Art of Acting,' *chap.* II, *pp.* 117–118, 119–120, 120–121, 130.

We went to see Fechter's *Othello* the other night. It is lamentably bad. He has not weight and passion enough for deep tragedy; and, to my feeling, the play is so degraded by his representation that it is positively demoralizing—as, indeed, all tragedy must be when it fails to move pity and terror. In this case it seems to move only titters among the smart and vulgar people who always make the bulk of a theatre audience.

GEORGE ELIOT, in 'Life,' by J. W. Cross, *vol. ii.*, *chap.* II, Nov. 20, 1861.

He was a very good Boulevard actor, and avowedly an imitator of Frederick Lemaitre. To see him and Lemaitre as *Ruy Blas*, for instance, were two very different things. Fechter knew this as well as any one else; he never could have done much at the Théâtre Français, whatever place he might have occupied at the Porte St. Martin. We were speaking together one day of Firmin's acting as *Don John of Austria*. I remember seeing him when I was a lad, and recall how admirably he indicated the soldier beneath the garb of the priest. Compelled by his father, the young warrior had taken holy orders, but his gait, his bearing, his whole manner, were martial. The contrast was striking in its incongruity. I asked Fechter if he could have

managed such an effect, and he frankly admitted that he could not. I saw his *Armand* when he played in 'La Dame aux Camelias' with Mme. Doche in 1850, and liked him in it; but that did not demand acting of the highest class, as *Ruy Blas* did. As for his *Hamlet*, well, his appearance was most picturesque, and had it been possible to see him without hearing him, the personation would have satisfied one. It was a performance a deaf man might have revelled in. But when he came to speak, it was buffoonery. If words and tones mean anything at all, they demand an adequate interpretation. Fechter could not speak English and that ended the whole matter. Even as far back as 1851, when I breakfasted with him in Paris, he had the distended stomach that has been referred to in the obituaries; the physicians had told him that it was caused by an acid turning into gas. He indulged in the most remarkable beverage—champagne and brandy. "I don't see how you can drink that," I would say. "Ah! you have never tasted it," he would rejoin, enthusiastically.

DION BOUCICAULT, reported in the New York *Sun*, Aug. 10, 1879.

I have met with many children who had a clearer idea than he possessed of pecuniary responsibilities. When he wanted money he borrowed it of the first friend whom he met, with the firmest imaginary belief in his capacity to make repayment at the shortest possible date. Under the same delusion he allowed greedy adventurers, in want of supplies, to involve him in debt with tradespeople by making their purchases in his name. His sympathy with worthier

friends in a state of pecuniary embarrassment was boundless. When he had no money to spare, and he was asked for a loan of "a few hundred pounds," he had no hesitation in borrowing the money from the friend who had it, and handing the sum over to the friend who had it not. When I remonstrated with him, he was always ready with his answer, "My dear Wilkie, you know I love you. Do you think I should love you if I didn't firmly believe that you would do just the same thing in my place?" He might have ended, poor fellow, by putting me in the wrong in a better way than this; he might have paid all his debts, and died with a mind at ease, but for that second defect in his character to which it is now my hard duty to allude.

The curse of an ungovernable temper was the curse of Fechter's life.

I am not speaking of mere outbreaks of furious anger. He was too sensitive and too generous a man not to be able to atone for forgetting himself in this way, as soon as his composure was restored. But, when he once took offence, a lurking devil saturated his whole being with the poison of unjust suspicion and inveterate hatred; and that devil, the better influences about him, distrusted rather than encouraged by himself, were powerless to cast out.

I have no heart to dwell on the number of friends (honestly admiring him, eager to serve him, guiltless of consciously offending him) whom he estranged forever,—self-deceived by his own impulsive misinterpretation of motives, or misled by false reports which he had no patience to examine before he accepted them as truths. When he first fascinated American

audiences (there is no exaggeration of his influence in using that word) he was offered, by formal agreement, pecuniary prospects which would have assured to him, as the reward for a few years' exercise of his art, a more than sufficient income for life. He quarrelled with the man, the thoroughly honest and responsible man who made him that offer. At a little social gathering, in the United States, the friend thus estranged said to me, "To this day I don't know what I did to give offence."

Other persons present were surprised to see that he spoke with tears in his eyes. I, who knew the irresistible attraction of Fechter, when he was in possession of himself, understood and respected that honest distress. It is useless to pursue this subject by citing other examples. When Fechter died in poverty, far away from relatives and friends in the Old World, it is not true,—I assert it from what I myself had opportunities of knowing,—it is not true to say that the miserable end was due to connections which he formed while in the United States. The one enemy to his prosperity was the enemy in himself. He paid the penalty of his ungovernable temper,—and no man can own it with truer sorrow than the man who has reluctantly written these lines.

Wilkie Collins, in Miss Kate Field's 'Fechter,' *pp.* 160–2.

He was the best love-maker I ever saw on the stage; he threw his whole heart and soul into it, and made love not merely in words but with the inflections of his voice, with his attitudes, with his eyes. *Ruy Blas* was unquestionably his best part. It had no blot.

His love for the *Queen* was most charmingly expressed; and in the last act of rage and vengeance on the traitor he was positively sublime. Mounet-Sully, who is the present *Ruy Blas* of the Comédie Française, and who appeared in England with Sara Bernhardt, is not to be compared to Fechter. I am afraid Lewes is right about his *Othello*. It was a desperately poor performance, full of French tricks and nonsense; but, on the other hand, his *Iago* was admirable. 'Hamlet' was the play with which he made most money. He had extraordinary dramatic power off the stage. Many and many a time he has kept me up till two or three in the morning, telling the plot of some piece which he intended to produce, and walking about the room, acting each scene and each character. He had a most unhappy knack of quarreling with people,—often those with whom he had been most intimate.

I recollect Dickens saying to me of him once that he had never met anybody with greater appreciative power of reading character. "He seemed," Dickens said, "to combine a man's insight with a woman's instinct."

EDMUND YATES, in Miss Kate Field's 'Fechter,' *pp.* 148, 149.

The first quality observable in Mr. Fechter's acting is, that it is in the highest degree romantic. However elaborated in minute details, there is always a peculiar dash and vigor in it, like the fresh atmosphere of the story whereof it is a part. When he is on the stage, it seems to me as though the story were transpiring before me for the first and last time. Thus there is a fervor in his love-making—a suffusion of his whole

being with the rapture of his passion—that sheds a glory on its object, and raises her, before the eyes of the audience, into the light in which he sees her.

It was this remarkable power that took Paris by storm, when he became famous in the lover's part in the 'Dame aux Camélias.' It is a short part, really comprised in two scenes; but, as he acted it (he was its original representative), he left its poetic and exalting influence on the heroine throughout the play. A woman who could be so beloved, who could be so devotedly and romantically adored, had a hold upon the general sympathy with which nothing less absorbing and complete could have invested her. . . . . .

Picturesqueness is a quality above all others pervading Mr. Fechter's assumptions. Himself a skilled painter and sculptor, learned in the history of costume, and informing those accomplishments and that knowledge with a similar infusion of romance (for romance is inseparable from the man), he is always a picture,—always a picture in its right place in the group, always in true composition with the background of the scene. For picturesqueness of manner, note so trivial a thing as the turn of his hand in beckoning from a window, in 'Ruy Blas,' to a personage down in an outer court-yard to come up; or his assumption of the *Duke's* livery in the same scene; or his writing a letter from dictation. In the last scene of Victor Hugo's noble drama, his bearing becomes positively inspired: and his sudden assumption of the attitude of the headsman, in his denunciation of the *Duke* and threat to be his executioner, is, so far as I know, one of the most ferociously picturesque things conceivable on the stage. . . . . .

This leads me to the observation with which I have all along desired to conclude : that Mr. Fechter's romance and picturesqueness are always united to a true artist's intelligence and a true artist's training in a true artist's spirit. He became one of the company at the Théâtre Français when he was a very young man, and he has cultivated his natural gifts in the best schools. I cannot wish my friend a better audience than he will have in the American people, and I cannot wish them a better actor than they will have in my friend.

CHARLES DICKENS, in the *Atlantic Monthly*, August, 1869.

It was the firm belief of Fechter's *Hamlet*, in defiance of general opinion to the contrary, that *Queen Gertrude* was *Claudius's* accomplice in the murder of her husband. In the time of Fechter's *Hamlet* it was the fashion in Denmark to wear a medallion portrait, swinging from a gold chain, round the neck. Fechter's *Hamlet* wore thus a portrait of his father ; the *Queen* wore a portrait of *Claudius ; Guildenstern* was similarly adorned. Usually there is not a pin to choose between *Rosencrantz* and *Guildenstern ;* the unfortunate gentlemen are alike odious to *Hamlet*, and they are slaughtered off the stage, at the instigation of that prince, after they have been well murdered in the presence of the house by their histrionic representatives. But to Fechter's *Hamlet Rosencrantz* was less hateful than *Guildenstern : Rosencrantz* wore no portrait round his neck. When Fechter's *Hamlet* spoke his first speech, and compared the late king to Hyperion, and *Claudius* to a satyr, he

produced and gazed fondly at his father's picture; when he mentioned his uncle's "picture in little" he illustrated his meaning by handling the medallion worn by *Guildenstern;* in the closet scene he places his miniature of his father side by side with his mother's miniature of *Claudius;* when at the close of their interview *Gertrude* outstretched her arm, and would embrace her son, he held up sternly the portrait of his father; the wretched woman recoiled and staggered from the stage; *Hamlet* reverentially kissed the picture as he murmured, "I must be cruel," etc. In the play-scene Fechter's *Hamlet*, when he rose at the discomforture of *Claudius*, tore the leaves from the play-book and flung them in the air; in the scene with *Ophelia*, Fechter's *Hamlet* did not perceive that the *King* was watching him; had he known *that* he would have been so convinced of his uncle's guilt that the play would have been unnecessary. In the fourth act, if Fechter's *Hamlet* had not been well guarded he would have killed the *King* then and there. In the last scene a gallery ran at the back of the stage with short flights of stairs on either side; all exits and entrances were made by means of these stairs. Upon the confession of *Laertes*, the *King* endeavored to escape up the right-hand staircase; *Hamlet* perceiving this, rushed up the left-hand stairs, and encountering *Claudius* in the centre of the gallery, there despatched him.

Dutton Cook: 'Hours with the Players,' *vol. ii., p.* 261–3.

MATILDA HERON.

1830–1877.

Sleep, sleep, poor weary pilgrim,
Thy life was mixed with toil, success and pain.
Thy loss we mourn in this sad world of trial,
Is to thee a blessing of immortal gain.

Sleep, sleep. Thou shalt be remembered
E'en tho' thou dwellest beyond the sky;
Thy memory lives like the stars of even,
And, Phœnix-like, *Camille* shall never die.

MARIE T. COURCELLES.

MATILDA HERON.

"A remarkable woman, as erratic in her moods as she was immovable in her serious resolves, possessed of a rare genius, one of the largest of human hearts, and the most impulsive of natures." Such is the testimony of one of her intimate friends to the character of Matilda Agnes Heron. She was an Irishwoman by birth, having first seen the light in the county of Londonderry, Dec. 1, 1830. Her parents were in but moderate circumstances, as holders of a small farm, and were compelled to seek a home in the United States before Matilda had reached her teens. She was barely twelve years of age when she landed upon American soil, and was taken by her family to Philadelphia. Her father died a few years after his change of home, but her brother, Alexander, became a very successful business man, and was subsequently well-known as the president of the Heron line of steamers plying between Charleston and Philadelphia. It was to this brother more than to any other on earth, save her adored daughter, Bijou, that she gave the passionate love of her nature. The old shawl which had wrapped his form when he passed away was always cherished by her as a sacred relic, and when her own end drew near, she folded it around her body, saying, "Don't take it away; I want it to die

on,—my brother died on it, you know." A similar incident is recorded of the widow of David Garrick, who, when she found the supreme hour approaching, desired that her wedding sheets should be brought and placed upon her bed.

Matilda Heron, soon after her arrival in Philadelphia, was sent to school near the Walnut Street Theatre, and most of her pocket-money is said to have been spent in buying admission to the performances at that then classic house. Her love for the theatre and the glamour thrown around her somewhat romantic nature by the plays she witnessed induced her to place herself under the tuition of the famous Peter Richings, whose stilted and labored style for many years marked her histrionic efforts, and even to the last clouded her natural genius with artificiality. Her first appearance on the stage took place at the Walnut, on Feb. 17, 1851, the character chosen for her *début* being that of *Bianca*, in the Rev. H. Hart Milman's tragedy of 'Fazio.' Though the crudeness of the novice was apparent in this, her earliest effort, she displayed an amount of talent sufficient to induce her many friends to sustain her in her idea of following the stage as her calling, and most devotedly and earnestly did she consecrate her powers to the study of the art she loved. She committed faithfully to memory the most popular of the leading female characters, and before a year had passed, she was familiar with the dialogue of *Lady Macbeth*, *Julia* in the 'Hunchback,' *Juliana* in the 'Honeymoon,' the *Countess* in 'Love,' *Juliet*, *Mariana* in the 'Wife,' and *Pauline* in the 'Lady of Lyons.' In 1851–2 she was at the National Theatre, Washington, where we find her appearing as *Juliet* to the *Romeo* of

Charlotte Cushman, and so great was the appreciation she received during her stay in that city, that she was engaged by Thos. S. Hamblin as leading lady of the Bowery Theatre. She appeared in New York, on Aug. 23, 1852, as *Lady Macbeth*, the *Thane* being played by the late Edward Eddy. It can hardly be said that her first metropolitan appearance was a success, the press notices of the day speaking rather slightingly of her weakness of voice and tameness of manner. After a season at the Bowery she returned to Philadelphia, playing at the Arch Street Theatre, and achieving a triumph as *Parthenia* and *Mrs. Haller*. Soon after she went to Boston, and it would appear that this visit was a turning point in her career, for it was here that she first acted with James E. Murdoch, who was her true friend through life, and to whom she was subsequently indebted for the opportunity to act in San Francisco, which secured her fame, and sent her forward to the public as a star. In Boston she supported the great comedian in Miles's play of 'De Soto,' and gained considerable praise for her representation of the heroine *Ulah*. After another visit to the scene of her early triumph, Philadelphia, she quite unexpectedly, to all her friends, sailed for California whither her kind friend and adviser, Murdoch, had preceded her, and landed in San Francisco late in December, 1853. With some difficulty she procured an opening at the American Theatre, since destroyed by fire, and chose for her appearance the part of *Bianca*, in which she had first asked the consideration of the public. *Fazio* was played by the manager of the theatre, Mr. John Lewis Baker, a valued and respected actor, and the husband of the lady so long

and favorably known as Alexina Fisher Baker. To say that she was successful would be to speak but coldly of the enthusiasm which greeted her upon the Pacific slope. The wildest extravagance of language was indulged in to sound her praise, and one of her critics remarked: "Miss Heron has been so lauded by the press since her arrival in California that we should be almost obliged to invent a new dictionary from which to search for words to express our high estimate of her talent." But not alone did praise for her artistic gifts pour in upon her, but the devotion of half the *jeunesse dorée* of San Francisco was at her feet, and her admirers were numbered by the score.

The one, however, who won the battle, and bore away in triumph the coveted prize, was a young and most able lawyer named Henry Herbert Byrne. The union, brief as it was, was productive of misery to both, and though the cause of the separation is shrouded even now in the deepest mystery, it is certain that upon Byrne's future it ever hung like a gloomy cloud, while the wife is known to have spoken, in her later days, with the warmest affection of "the first love of her life." The marriage, which was secret, took place on June 10, 1854, in St. Patrick's Church, San Francisco, and according to a previous arrangement, after a honeymoon of but five days, the bride sailed from California for the Eastern States, prepared to take her farewell of the stage, and lapse into the delightful domestic life which seemed to open up before her. The voyage, which was then made by way of Panama, occupied nearly a month, and by a previous understanding, as soon as his business affairs could be placed

in a condition which would enable him to leave them for a time to the care of others, the bridegroom was to follow and bring his wife back to her western home. Mr. Byrne left San Francisco for Philadelphia early in September, joined his wife in Pittsburgh, remained in her society but a single night, then left her, never more to meet her on earth, and returned to San Francisco a wretched and a broken man. The cause of this sudden parting is, as has been said, unknown; but whatever it might have been, the two lives affected by it felt its force, and carried it with them to their graves. Mr. Byrne died in March, 1872, bequeathing a considerable fortune to his friend, Mr. E. Carpentier, even at the last endeavoring to blot the remembrance of the sad episode of his life out of his memory. He was spoken of in an obituary notice as a "pure and dignified gentleman, a thorough scholar, and a sincere friend, and as a lawyer his ability gained him a position at the bar attained by few." The writer, who knew him well and intimately, can bear ample testimony to his generous nature, and to his wide-spread knowledge, as well as to the shade of sorrow which darkened his life and cast an occasional gloom over what was naturally a bright and sunny nature.

After this romantic but sad event of her career, Miss Heron took her departure for England, and appeared at Drury Lane in her old part of *Bianca*, receiving so high commendation from the press that had she chosen then to make England her home fortune and fame would surely have gleamed across her path. But she crossed the channel, visited Paris, and saw Mme. Doche acting in the 'Dame aux Camélias,' which had taken the gay city by storm. It is related

that "one night in the theatre some one tapped her on the shoulder and whispered, 'Tilly, if you translate that and introduce it at home you will make your fortune.' She turned in wonder; it was her brother Alexander." Her reply was, "I'll do it;" and in a month she had translated the play, mastered the part, and taken passage for the land of her adoption. Her first essay in the character with which her fame is most closely associated was in October, 1855; but it was not until 1857 that she made her bow before a New York audience as *Camille*, and became at once recognized as an actress of unusual ability and power. The late Edward A. Sothern was the *Armand* of the occasion, and also supported the new star in many tragic parts of importance, including that of *Jason* in Miss Heron's own version of 'Medea.' From this time onwards, for several years, her career was one of continued triumph, and it has been said that she received for her performance of the heroine of Dumas' play not less than $100,000 for her share alone. She appeared in all the principal cities of the Union with boundless success, and in addition to 'Camille' she produced her own dramas of 'Lesbia,' 'Mathilde,' 'Gamea, the Hebrew Mother,' 'Duel in the Days of Richelieu,' and many others. It will thus be seen that not only in the direction of her own profession, but in that of literature she was earnest, industrious, and painstaking; many of her plays evincing the presence of refined taste and high dramatic power.

In 1857 she was married to Mr. R. Stoepel, then the leader of the orchestra at Wallack's Theatre, and an accomplished musician. This union, like the previous marriage, was most unhappy, and she separated from

Mr. Stoepel in 1869, one daughter, Bijou (now well-known as Mrs. Henry Miller), being the only child born to them. The causes of this separation are easy to understand. Mr. Stoepel was a careful man, with an eye to the future, and could not bear the flighty and capricious extravagance of his wife, who threw money about her with a lavish hand, heedless to whom she gave, or for what purpose it was applied. Uncongeniality of nature and temperament, and—*hinc illæ lachrymæ.*

In 1860, she paid her second visit to England in company with her husband, and in February of the following year, she again sought the suffrages of a London audience in an entertainment of a somewhat novel character, projected and arranged by Mr. Stoepel. This was no other than a recitation, with musical accompaniment of Longfellow's poem of 'Hiawatha.' It is certain that Mrs. Stoepel charmed the Londoners by her reading, which was said by the *Illustrated London News*, to possess "a wild and fantastic interest, and to be fraught with intense beauty and feeling," but it is equally certain that the entertainment was a dismal failure, and that it was withdrawn after a run of two weeks. Later in the year she produced one of her own comedies 'New Year's Eve,' at the Lyceum Theatre, but it was not received with favor, and after a brief tour through France and Germany, she again returned to the United States early in 1862, and appeared at the Winter Garden in the play which had proved for her a failure in London, and which she now produced under its sub-title, the 'Belle of the Season.' It failed to draw and for some time afterwards, indeed until the close of her theatrical life,

Camille was the only part which proved of pecuniary service to her, and it was in this that she always commenced her starring engagements. In 1865, she again visited California, and was given an ovation by her old friends and admirers. She remained on the Pacific Coast about four months, having played successful engagements at most of the inland towns as well as at Virginia City, Nevada. From the time of her return to New York after her second visit to San Francisco, she appeared but little before the public, and gradually sank into a half-obscurity. She took pupils for the stage, but she taught them little but how to play *Camille* from her own standpoint; and her domestic troubles which now began to bear with telling effect upon her, made her careless of herself and reckless of her artistic reputation. The close of her life was of the saddest character—the once brilliant woman, noble and generous to a fault, who gave of her hard earnings so openly that she herself often in consequence knew the actual pangs of starvation, her confidence in human nature wrecked by the ingratitude of many she had helped and cherished, and out of all to whom she gave her love, with none near her but her adored Bijou —poor in the bitterest acceptation of the term, prematurely old, and with the once sparkling intellect dimmed and gone astray, presented a spectacle in her latter years that the coldest heart could but regard with pity, and with a tender lament for the contrast between her fading life and the days of her plenitude and her pride. Death must have come to her as a welcome "surcease of sorrow," and when the curtain fell for the last time upon the drama of her life, it shut from our view a woman who though

eccentric and wild in her nature, was gifted with one of the most gentle of human hearts, and upon an artist of undoubted genius, who with happier surroundings, would have left even a broader mark than she has done upon the dramatic history of her period. She died in New York, May 7, 1877. Her last words were "Tilly never did harm to any one—poor Tilly is so happy"—and the turbulent spirit went out to its life of peace and rest, free from the turmoil, the strife, the heart-crushing disappointments it had encountered here.

HENRY EDWARDS.

The night of the twenty-second of January [1857] was cold and uninviting. There was no opera, and I know not why I was anxious to witness the *début* of a Western actress at Wallack's Theatre; but it was fated, and I sallied forth into the snow. I sat in the orchestra, and was not at all crowded. There came upon the stage a fine woman with an easy manner, and who spoke two or three words in a natural tone. I was surprised at the phenomenon, and attended to what she should do or say next. Of course I was amazed at her daring portrayal of *Camille;* but when the curtain fell at the end of the first act I acknowledged the spell of genius. As the play went on I became absorbed. By and by, eye and ear were both touched by an electricity that reached brain and heart; and ere the climax I had experienced such a wrenching and tightening of emotions, such a whirlwind of feeling, as made criticism impossible. All I had to do was to give myself up to the

sway of the magician to be swept away by the torrent of enthusiasm in which the whole audience was involved.

And first of all her naturalness. This first demands applause from the most discerning critic, and ends by provoking cavils. This first forces itself upon your notice, this first rivets your attention; this is the great secret of her acting,—is her talent, ay, and her art. Surely naturalness cannot be decried. And yet this is not only her great peculiarity, it is, perhaps, her fault. She is absolutely too natural. She portrays a character exactly as it is, not without one touch of grace not its own, but with every touch of awkwardness belonging to it. She not only adds nothing, but subtracts nothing. She not only idealizes not, refines not, elevates not; she eliminates nothing of coarse or displeasing; she spares no harrowing thought, no disgusting minutiæ; she is not only terrible in her life-likeness, but at times offensive. And yet this very offensiveness adds to her thrall over you: you are held in spite of your dislike because of it. The vulgarity of the earlier scenes in 'Camille' is fearful in its faithfulness, but effective as well; the repulsiveness of the sick-bed scene is painfully real. And here Miss Heron differs from any other actress I have seen. All others refine, in some degree, either by throwing a charm around a character that it cannot really claim, or by concealing defects which it absolutely possesses. Here, too, Miss Heron differs especially from the great French actress with whom she has been sometimes compared; for this Western performer has indeed thrust herself into the foremost rank, and is to be judged only by comparison with

the foremost. As she is great, she must, in many things, be like her who is greatest. . . . . So in her love scenes. Rachel could not love,—at least on the stage ; she was too intellectual. But Miss Heron is more of the woman ; none of the statue about her ; her full bust beats with the pulses of a sensuous nature ; her eye that glows not with the snake-like, withering power of Rachel, burns with intense tenderness, and is radiant with an ecstacy of joy that the other knew not of ; her voice, though it breaks, and is harsh or whimpering, yet tells the true language of passion ; its tones touch nerves that Rachel could never strike ; its accents provoke tears that none other can so wonderfully excite. She has a field all her own ; not classic, not ideal, not terrible ; but womanly, passionate, human.

ADAM BADEAU : the 'Vagabond,' Matilda Heron.

Miss Heron's first entrance was wonderfully unconventional. The woman dared to come in upon that painted scene as if it really was the home apartment it was represented to be. She did not slide in with her face to the audience, and wait for the mockery that is called "a reception." She walked in easily, naturally, unwitting of any outside eyes. The petulant manner in which she took off her shawl, the commonplace conversational tone in which she spoke to her servant, were revelations to Minnie and myself. Here was a daring reality. Here was a woman who, sacrificing for the moment all conventional prejudices, dared to play the *lorette* as the *lorette* herself plays her dramatic life, with all her whims, her passion, her fearlessness of consequences, her occasional vulgari-

ties, her impertinence, her tenderness and self-sacrifice!

It was not that we did not see faults. Occasionally Miss Heron's accent was bad, and had a savor of Celtic origin. But what mattered accent, or what mattered elocution, when we felt ourselves in the presence of an inspired woman!

Miss Heron's *Camille* electrified both Minnie and myself. My wife was particularly *bouleversée*. The artist we were beholding had not in a very marked manner any of those physical advantages which Minnie had predicated in her onslaught on the dramatic stars. It is true that Miss Heron's figure was commanding, and there was a certain powerful light in her eyes that startled and thrilled; but there was not the beauty of the "favorite actress." The conquest that she achieved was purely intellectual and magnetic.

Of course we were present at the next performance. It was 'Medea.' We then beheld the great actress under a new phase. In *Camille* she died for love; in *Medea* she killed for love. I never saw a human being so *rocked* by emotion as was my wife during the progress of this tragedy. Her countenance was a mirror of every incident and passion. She swayed to and fro under those gusts of indignant love that the actress sent forth from time to time, and which swept the house like a storm.

FITZ-JAMES O'BRIEN: 'Mother of Pearl' in the 'Diamond Lens, with Other Stories,' *pp.* 126–7.

. . . . . The success of Miss Heron in the part was wonderful; she did win from the press of the country the highest praise; she did certainly deserve very

much of the praise and success she received; she was devoted to her art, and gave to the elaboration of the part her utmost power of body, heart and mind; and she certainly was entitled to the copyright of the particular version of the play she produced; but her version was not the first, nor do we think it was the best; she was not the original *Camille* in America, nor do we think she was the best; and we cannot agree with her that 'Camille' possesses powerful fascination, poetic interest, or immortal life.

LAURENCE HUTTON: 'Plays and Players,' *chap.* 14, *p.* 161, *pp.* 163–4.

The performance given at Niblo's yesterday afternoon, for the benefit of Miss Matilda Heron, was completely successful. The house was crowded. The programme of the entertainment has already been supplied to our readers. It was interpreted with scrupulous fidelity, and none of its elements went unrewarded with attention or applause. Previous to the departure of the audience Miss Heron delivered a brief address. Its closing lines, which were positively touching, ran thus:

"I have been an actress for twenty-seven years. To-day I have no parents, and no living relative save one little daughter. I am but a poor, humble woman, and it may be a consolation to you to know and to feel when you go home to-night that you have raised a woman out of the depths of misery and despair; that you have provided sustenance for the present, and given her hopes for the future. New life has come to me through your kindness, and far beyond all else, I am thankful to you that your presence here enables

me to look with calmness on the bitter past. When I read that attack, (the St. Louis slander,) I, for the first time, thanked God that my father, my mother, my brothers, my relatives, were dead. I still have left to me, though, one darling little daughter, and if in Heaven's mercy I am spared to rear and educate her, I shall instill one sentiment into her mind, 'Bijou Heron, be grateful to the people of New York for the monument they have given your mother this day.' I need not say more. I shall take another place and occasion to thank my fellow-artists; but believe me that no prayer will ascend to heaven to-night more fresh and sincere than mine for your prosperity and welfare."

New York *Times*, July 17, 1874.

Twenty years ago, when Matilda Heron came forward in the character of *Camille*, if she was not a great artist, she certainly was a very remarkable example of elemental power. She had a wildness of emotion, a force of brain, a vitality in embodiment and many indefinable magnetic qualities, that combined to make her exceptional among human creatures. Those who saw her then saw a woman unusual for personal charms —strong and fine in physique, with dark hair, dark eyes, and a beautiful white complexion—but more unusual for an electrical sympathy of temperament that captivated every heart. Miss Heron was never more at her best than in *Camille*. She appeared in other parts, but that was the part she always acted; and, though it is true that she may have somewhat refined upon her method in after years, she never acted it better than at the first. It afforded the agonized and

agonizing situation which alone could serve for the utterance of her tempestuous nature. Once, in later times, speaking to an author about a play that she wished to have written for her, she was careful to state that the heroine must be "a lost woman." No doubt she knew, as everybody knows, that a woman lost is not a particle more dramatic than a woman found; but she loved the storm and reveled in the reckless agony of a nature that is at war with itself. More than almost any other woman we can call to mind upon the stage, Matilda Heron knew what it is to love, and what it is to suffer through the truth or through the consequences of that awful tremendous passion. When, in the first act of 'Camille,' she used to rush forward and sob out the exclamation, "Respect me—and in this house," she made the heart of every man who heard her stand still in his bosom; and when she parted from the lover whom she never meant to see again in this world, her agony was so great and so real that few men could look upon its exhibition. Hers was not, perhaps, the power of the imagination —that seizes upon an ideal and enables the artist to rise out of this actual world and embody a creature of the poetic brain, like *Lady Macbeth*—but hers, beyond all doubt, was the human woman's heart, that had sounded every depth of passion and could embrace all possible experience of woman in that world of love which is so essentially her own. And while she was thus human and passionate in fibre, she was weird and fascinating in her individuality. All her ways were her own—and the eye followed her with a strange kind of delight at absolute newness and formidable sincerity. She often failed to satisfy the intellect, with

reference to classic forms of ancient literature, or to set molds of modern character. Her *Medea*, for example was half a prowling maniac and half a reckless slouch,—with now and then a gleam of fateful fury, like fire that streams through the suddenly opened mouth of the volcano; and her *Edith* and *Sybil* and *Geraldine* were erratic and *bizarre* figures, only to be remembered for strong and surprising points. But no spectator of her acting ever—till her powers were on the wane—missed the sense of an original, vigorous, brilliant, and startling personality. She was an actress of the passions,—and of the passions in their universal ebb and flow. This sort of a nature, unless it be curbed by a prodigious moral sense and intellect, inevitably breaks all the bounds of a serene life. Matilda Heron's career has been full of trouble and sorrow. It is easy to say that she brought them upon herself; it might be wiser to say that Heaven, which made her what she was, ruled the event to its own ends; it certainly is truthful to say that she wrought the labor of her life with a profound, earnest, passionate, and virtuous sincerity; that she touched, in thousands of hearts, the spring of gentle charity; that she dealt a blow which has staggered alike the canting sensualist and the canting Pharisee; and, with all her faults and failings, that she leaves the memory, not alone of one of the greatest elemental forces in the dramatic art, but of a large-hearted, tender, magnanimous woman.

Wm. Winter, in the New York *Tribune*, March 12, 1877.

E. A. SOTHERN.

1826–1881.

Sothern we miss—and who shall take his place?
Nature and art consorted in his race.
Nature must e'en another mind produce,
And art beguile it into cunning use.
No easy task to be at once inane,
And irresistibly absurd, though sane!
No more 'tis ours to sit with parted lip,
Watching for *Lord Dundreary's* glare and skip;
No more that portrait of a master hand;
The lisping speech, the nonsense wisely planned;
The word and action held at wit's command.
Farewell *Dundreary!* and in losing you
We lost your *Sam* and *Crushed Tragedian*, too.

Wm. L. Keese.

E. A. SOTHERN.

In the career of the late Edward Askew Sothern is to be found a striking example of the intense individuality which results from the combination of those qualities that mark at once the sterling actor and the true gentleman. Coming into the notice of playgoers at a period when the best talent and genius of the century were represented on the dramatic stage, he achieved a success that was phenomenal ; but it was a success that was due entirely to happy intuition, combined with intelligent study and patient enduring toil. It was no royal road to fame that he trod for many a weary year, nor yet was it mere accident that finally enabled him "to grasp the rose that blossomed above the thorns." Born in Liverpool, on April 1, 1826, his father being a well-to-do ship-broker, ample opportunities were afforded him by his family for the study of a profession, and for some years he was educated by a private tutor, the rector of an English church. With the understanding that he was to become a surgeon he went to London, but a few months' experience in the operating and dissecting rooms of the Middlesex Hospital, disgusted young Sothern with the idea of ever being an instrument of pain to others and he abandoned the work. Then followed a course of theological study for two or

three years, and to the day of his death grave theological books were his favorite reading. But, as he once said to the writer over our camp-fire in Labrador, his investigations in this direction and several controversies with clergymen threw a wet blanket on his ambition to represent the church militant, and determined the bent of his mind in another direction. He felt what was true, that he was born to be an actor, and throwing his whole soul into the study of the old dramas, he soon became an acceptable amateur and as such appeared for the first time on any stage at the Theatre Royal, Island of Jersey, in the character of *Othello*. That he must have made an impression, even then, is attested by the fact that the managers at once offered him an engagement at a salary of thirty-five shillings a week. What? thirty-five shillings a week for a full-fledged *Othello?* Never! So the offer was indignantly declined. A short time afterwards, he was willing to accept a salary of fifteen shillings a week. Sothern was then twenty-one years of age. A few months before his death he humorously described these early experiences to me, saying: "On my arrival in the theatre in Guernsey, where I had been engaged, I found the play of 'Hamlet' announced for the first night, and that I was cast for *Laertes*, the *Ghost*, and the *Second Actor*. Jupiter! how that staggered me! Nevertheless nothing was to be done except to pin a memorandum on the wings to tell me when to make the changes and to go ahead and take the risk. Some diabolical joker, however, knowing that I was a greenhorn, took the memorandum down, and the consequence was, that relying on my memory, I was continually bounding on the stage

in the wrong character. Oh, the agony of that night. Fancy the *Ghost* going on to act as *Laertes*. I was immediately dismissed for incapacity. In fact the early portion of my professional career was marked by *frequent* dismissals for incapacity."

A few months later Charles Kean saw Sothern in the character of *Claude Melnotte*, and the next morning sent him a letter in which, while pointing out the faults of the novice, he recognized his originality and strongly recommended him to adopt the stage as his profession. Several seasons now passed during which young Sothern acquired experience by playing parts that ranged from *Romeo* to the low comedy business, and had so well advanced himself that Hailes Lacy, a dramatic publisher of London, induced him to visit the United States. His first appearance was in Boston, Mass., Nov. 1, 1852, where he opened as *Dr. Pangloss*, and in a farce called 'John Dobbs.' In his memoirs, Sothern says: "My failure in *Pangloss* was complete, although the audience were kind enough, because I was a stranger, to call me before the curtain, but the papers cut me up mercilessly and unanimously, and I had common sense enough to know that their remarks were strictly true. I was again dismissed for incapacity. I then went to the Howard Athenæum to play juvenile parts at a reduced salary, but they dismissed me again for incapacity."

It will be observed that no one was more outspoken in his recognition of the weak points of his acting than Sothern himself, and this was one of his characteristics through life. He knew better than the critics when his efforts called for praise or censure, and he always regarded the harsh and varied experience

encountered by him during his early career as among the most educational and valuable of his life.

After leaving Boston, Sothern went to New York where he secured an engagement in Barnum's Museum in 1853, and played twice a day for a salary of twenty or twenty-five dollars a week. Subsequently, he went under the management of Mr. Marshall of the Broadway Theatre, New York, and the National Theatre, Washington, D. C., and later under that of Laura Keene in Baltimore. From the latter he transferred his allegiance to Mr. James W. Wallack (Sept. 9, 1854), with whom he remained four years in the old theatre on Broadway near Broome Street. During this period, he patiently watched every opportunity to make his mark, and in every piece produced he understudied the parts of Lester Wallack and Charles Walcott, in order that he might be prepared at a moment's notice to take their places. At last the opportunity came. It was on the occasion of the appearance of Matilda Heron in 'Camille,' Jan. 22, 1857. Three days before the production of the play, Mr. Wallack asked Sothern if he could study the part of *Armand Duval* in time for the performance. The reply was that he had already prepared himself, and when the play was given Sothern for the first time in his life received several enthusiastic recalls. It was only a week before this that he had made up his mind to return to England and seek some other employment.

Leaving Wallack's, Sothern rejoined Laura Keene in her theatre in New York. Here was first produced the piece known as the 'American Cousin,' by Tom Taylor, Oct. 18, 1858. It was originally written for

Josh Silsbee a "Yankee comedian," and *Lord Dundreary* was a fourth rate old man with only forty-seven lines to speak. At first Sothern absolutely refused to take the character, but it was finally agreed that he should rewrite it to suit himself. He did so, and threw into the part everything that occurred to him as wildly absurd. Success during the first two or three weeks was by no means assured, but it was not long before the people began to recognize the eccentricity and satire of the character and the exquisite humor with which it had been invested. There was not a detail of dress or action that had not been the subject of diligent observation and study, and the whole was so carefully made to fit the man that few even of the cleverest actors ever have been able successfully to imitate the characterization presented by the great original. In speaking of the distortion of the old aphorisms which are introduced in the play, Sothern related to me the following incident: "A number of us some years ago were taking supper in Halifax after a performance, when a gentleman who has retired from the stage suddenly entered the room, and facetiously remarked, 'Oh yes, I see . . . . . birds of a feather, et cetera." The thought instantly struck me, and with a wink at my associates, assuming utter ignorance, I inquired, 'What do you mean by birds of a feather?' He looked rather staggered and replied, 'What! have you never heard of the old English proverb, birds of a feather flock together?' Every one present shook his head. 'Confound it,' he said, 'I never met such a lot of ignoramusses in my life.' That was my cue, and I began to turn the proverb inside out. I said to him there never could

have been such a proverb as 'birds of a feather' . . . . the idea of a whole flock of birds having only one feather! The thing is ridiculous. Besides the poor bird that had that feather must have flown on one side; consequently as the other birds couldn't fly at all, they couldn't flock together. But, even accepting the absurdity, if they flocked at all they must flock together, for no bird could possibly be such a damned fool as to go away into a corner and try to flock by himself.' Our visitor began to see the point of the logic and joined in the roars of laughter. Years afterwards, I elaborated the idea in writing *Dundreary.*" The piece had a long run on this occasion, and the tide of prosperity having turned in favor of Sothern, he determined to revisit London.

Mrs. Florence and I had just returned from England and he sought my advice. I told him he was sure to succeed, calling to his mind the fact that whenever *Punch* caricatured the follies of the English nobility, it was taken with good grace, so that the absurdities of *Lord Dundreary* would be well received and appreciated. He left New York for London in the year 1861. He was warmly welcomed, and Mr. Buckstone, the manager of the Haymarket Theatre, being in want of an attraction, agreed to produce 'Our American Cousin,' on Nov. 11, although he confessed that he did so with not a little fear and trembling. All the actors and actresses connected with the theatre predicted its failure. Buckstone, himself, to help the performance along, consented to play the part of *Asa Trenchard*, but nobody except Sothern himself had any confidence in it.

The success of 'Our American Cousin,' however,

was immediate and continuous, everybody understood it, everybody enjoyed it, and *Lord Dundreary* was elevated to the peerage of Great Britain, Ireland and Scotland by unanimous consent, and became by long odds the best known member of the English aristocracy. The swells of London, whom it was supposed would be very hostile to this caricature of a British nobleman, were the first to appreciate it and understand it, and adopt its mannerisms, its drawl, its dress, and often its peculiar skip. To this day you cannot make yourself better understood in London than when you speak of "*Dundreary* whiskers" to your barber, or a "*Dundreary* coat" to your tailor. The most popular actors seldom get beyond a necktie or a photograph, but *Dundreary* created a peer and a style. In London, as in New York, his modern costumes on and off the stage were regarded as models by the most fashionable people. At one time he bought a long frieze coat from a pig driver in Ireland, because he thought it was picturesque and comfortable, and introduced something like it on the stage, and thus originated the ulster and its half-dozen variations.

For four hundred and ninety-six nights consecutively the Haymarket was crowded with the aristocracy of England, and the young man who but a few years before had left his country almost penniless to seek his fortune upon the shores of America, returned to be overwhelmed with public praise and to enjoy an ovation such as has never been bestowed upon an actor of his time.

Lord Dundreary will doubtless be the character with which the memory of Sothern will be most intimately

associated. Yet those who remember his *David Garrick*, his *Fitzaltamont* in the 'Crushed Tragedian,'—"the dry bones of a common caricature into which he breathed vitality,"—and his sparkling *Sydney Spoonbill* in the 'Hornet's Nest,' will always recall the superb Meissonier-like minuteness of art with which he reproduced nature in pictures that were harmoniously perfect. Whatever he did was done with regard to thoroughness of detail, and intense identification with the character in which he was to appear. He was wont to say that there is not an audience in the world who will not be quick to detect the sympathy existing between an actor and his part.

It is but natural that one capable of investing his stage creations with such strong individuality should, in his own person, possess many peculiar characteristics. In the matured physique of middle life, as he last appeared to me, just before he died, Sothern was about five feet ten inches in height, and put together as if intended for hard work. His face, undisturbed by a wrinkle or a line of care, and habitually quiet, was lighted up, under a mass of beautiful white hair, by a pair of bright bluish-gray eyes, which looked as if they were undergoing continual drill to keep them in proper subjection. His countenance, full of expression, at times might have been carved out of lignum vitæ, for it was a dead wall when he chose it to be so, and again it was filled with a crowd of welcomes that met one with the cheeriest of smiles. A long gray mustache concealed the mouth, but it could not hide the humor that hovered around the neighborhood, when, free from conventional restraints, and among his friends, he could enjoy to the

full the bent of a frank, ingenuous, and hospitable nature.

Still he was not free from certain oddities. He frankly confessed that he could not endure a scent in the room. "I love birds, animals, pets of all kinds," he said, "but take me away from a perfume. My sister cannot bear the sight of grapes; and a color that is not harmonious, a picture hung awry, a room full of disorder without apparent cause,—in fact, a thousand trifles which affect nobody else produce in me the most disagreeable sensations. Doubtless this is due to an intensely nervous disposition which I have inherited from both my father and mother, but I can't help it; like the gout, it's in the blood."

His temperament was largely emotional. He was impulsive, and had strong intuitive likes and dislikes which it was difficult to eradicate; but to his friends he was true as steel. The love of children had a large place in his nature, and the amount he expended in charities would be a fortune to some persons. He was forgiving, too. I remember when a man attached to a scurrilous paper in New York attempted to blackmail him, filling columns with vile abuse week after week; but at length this fellow came to him expressing contrition, pleading poverty and the fear of having his wife and babes turned out of doors. Sothern gave him money sufficient to alleviate his distress, saying, "All right, old man; don't do it again." So great was his aversion to solitude that, no matter where he might be, his hospitable table was always spread for one or more guests at every meal, and then he would order the most extravagant dishes for no other purpose than to see them enjoy the repast.

Regarding his own appetite, "Plain fare and plenty of friends" was his motto. While a brave, he was not an aggressive, man, but always ready to defend himself or his friends, and to resent insult with an energy calculated to astonish any person who mistook his poise. He was fond of style, but never ostentatious; and his love of the beautiful is shown in his rare collections of bric-à-brac and articles of virtu.

Intellectually he was a man of fine mind. In his earlier studies for the medical and theological professions he had enjoyed a wide range of reading, and, with his natural aptitude and habits of observation, would probably have been successful in any pursuit he might have followed. In business he never procrastinated, and he was singularly methodical; while on the stage he exacted the most punctilious nicety in the rendition of the respective parts. Without having a passion for literary pursuits there were few men who could better analyze, illustrate, classify, or construct, and hence he would doubtless have excelled in the field of fiction. His constructiveness and ideality were shown, not only in the frequent revision of his plays, but in the creations of character which no one has been able to imitate. Possessing a good command of language and poetic sensibilities he often refined that which had come from the master hand. His disposition was bright and sunny, and, with his keen sense of humor combined with rare imitative power, he was a most charming companion. As a practical joker he had few equals, and a record of all the wild pranks he played would fill a volume, but they never made an enemy or left a sting behind. He

was a true sportsman, a good shot, and capital cross-country rider.

On the morning of Jan. 20, 1881, he succumbed to the disease that had for many weeks kept him prisoner, and died at 6 Vere Street, London. His body lies in the cemetery at Southampton.

WM. J. FLORENCE.

It was anticipated that Douglas Stewart [Sothern] who came highly recommended to Mr. Leonard, would prove a card. Some even predicted that William Warren of the Museum was to have a rival. His *début* was as *Dr. Pangloss* ['Heir at Law,' National Theatre, Boston, Nov. 1, 1852], and poor enough it proved, but his apologists attributed the failure to the "natural embarrassment of the occasion." Unfortunately, Mr. Stewart never got over his embarrassment, and Mr. Leonard, finding that the artist was not up to "invoice value," a mutual agreement to separate, after a few weeks, took place.

WM. W. CLAPP: 'Records of the Boston Stage,' *chap.* 29, *pp.* 410–11.

'Our American Cousin' is a piece of transatlantic extravagance which will have a long run at the Haymarket, not only because it is well mounted and acted, and presents Mr. Buckstone in a Yankee character, but more especially for the sake of a sketch new to our stage, given by an actor hitherto unknown in London, Mr. Sothern, with an eccentric and whimsical elaboration that is irresistibly amusing. It is the republican American's contemptuous notion of an

English lord. There is absolute vacuity in the head of *Lord Dundreary*, but his whiskers are, with help of dye, in good condition. He is polite and good-natured, although inane, and very indulgent to an outside world that puzzles him sorely, by consisting chiefly of people whom he takes to be lunatics. The stale jokes and the extravagant suggestions of emptiness—his Lordship does not know what butter is—and has trouble to fit the name to the thing in speaking of a cow—would be intolerably stupid in the hands of almost any actor. But Mr. Sothern has overlaid it all with innumerable ludicrous touches of manner and by-play, and is so imperturbably extravagant, that shouts of laughter follow almost every look and gesture. He contrives, in the midst of all the extravagance, to maintain for his inane lord the air of a well-bred, good-natured gentleman ; and shows an art in his absurdity that makes us curious to see what he can do in some other character. But it will be long before he has leave from the public to do anything but identify himself with *Lord Dundreary*.

Henry Morley : 'Journal of a London Playgoer,' Nov. 16, 1861.

It was, however, in a part of his own invention that Mr. Sothern may be said to have begun his unusually successful career. Out of the part of *Lord Dundreary*, a very subordinate part of some forty lines in Mr. Tom Taylor's 'Our American Cousin,' he made what it is not too much to describe as a new creation. He conceived an idea of what such a part might be, and this idea he worked at and elaborated until he was able to bring the play to London with *Dundreary*, instead of

Asa Trenchard, as its chief character. Since his first successful appearance here, much, perhaps too much, of Mr. Sothern's time and energy have been spent in devising and introducing variations upon this strange invention of his. Much of the business which he presented at first is now omitted, and much new business and dialogue has been added; but the conception of the indolent, half-educated, half-idiotic swell, with a strange vein of shrewdness and humorous perception in his character, remains the same. In this part Mr. Sothern excels, as Lamb says Dodd did, in "expressing slowness of apprehension;" and yet there is such a quaint and unexpected mixture of cleverness and readiness with his tardy perceptions, and his simple surprise at anything new to him, that his audience never tire of contemplating his whimsicalities. He is half-conscious of his own folly, and keenly alive to that of others. When his valet, with brutal frankness, presuming on and overrating his master's want of wits, confesses to his shameless insolence and thieving, *Dundreary* is more amused than indignant at the fellow's impudence, and, putting all question of his own supineness aside, wonders whether he had not better retain such a "magnificent idiot" in his service. He is throughout half-foolish and half-clever; thoroughly selfish, and without the vestige of a high aim in life. Yet he is not unattractive, nor is it merely as a butt that he pleases. There is an indefinable quality in his character, imported into it by Mr. Sothern, which produces at least what is called "a sneaking kindness" for *Dundreary*.

In *David Garrick*, his best known part, Mr. Sothern takes a higher flight, and ventures into the regions of

pathos. His scene of affected drunkenness is admirable both in stage *technique* and in indicating the under-current of deep emotion in a man who, moved by a noble impulse, assumes a part in reality grossly repugnant to him, and the few lines of Shakspere which he delivers under these conditions carry with them the suggestion at least of an undeveloped power. In the purely pathetic passages the actor has, it seems to me, steadily improved with increasing experience.

WALTER HERRIES POLLOCK, in the *Theatre*, March, 1880.

The piece known as the 'American Cousin,' by Tom Taylor, was put in rehearsal. I was cast for the part of *Lord Dundreary*, a fourth-rate old man, only forty-seven lines. I refused the part, but finally agreed with Mr. Burnett, the stage manager, to play on the condition that I should *entirely rewrite it*. Miss Keene was also full of objections, which, however, she finally yielded. In rewriting the part, I threw into it everything that struck me as wildly absurd. There is not a single look, word, or act in *Lord Dundreary* that has not been suggested to me by persons whom I have known since I was five years of age. It has been frequently said that I have cut the piece down for the purpose of Dundrearyising the performance. This is not true. I have simply cut out the cellar scene, a drunken act, which was never popular, and so rearranged the play, that instead of seventeen scenes, which it had when it came from the hands of the author, it is now in four acts of one scene each.

My part the first night was by no means a pronounced success. In fact, it was two or three weeks

before the people began to understand what I was about. I had acted so many serious parts before, that the public evidently considered that every tone of my voice ought to be pathetic, just as they now seem to think that every tone represents some mad eccentricity.

"How," I have been asked, "did you happen to hit on that strange hop, skip, and jump business, which has been made so effective in your delineation of the character?"

"Why," I reply, "it was the simplest thing in the world; it was a mere accident. I have naturally an elastic disposition, and during a rehearsal one cold morning I was hopping at the back of the stage, when Miss Keene sarcastically inquired if I was going to introduce that in *Dundreary*. The actors and actresses standing around laughed, and taking the cue, I replied: 'Yes, Miss Keene; that's my view of the character.' Having said this I was bound to stick to it, and as I progressed with the rehearsal I found that the whole company, including scene shifters and property-men, were roaring with laughter at my infernal nonsense. When I saw that the public accepted the satire I toned it down to the broad caricature which may be seen at the present day by any one who has a quick sense of the absurd."

E. A. SOTHERN, in the *Theatre*, August, 1878.

Where could be found a more brilliant man, a more fascinating companion than Sothern? As swift in wit as a French woman, as swift in action as a juggler, he combined with these gifts great tenderness and charm of nature. I am sorry to find no record of our intercourse with him except what is set down on the

treacherous tablets of the memory; but I remember his coming was always a signal that the thermometer was rapidly rising, and everything beginning to glow with a midsummer radiance of feeling and color.

MRS. FIELDS: 'James T. Fields: Biographical Sketch,' *pp.* 125–6.

While in New York, and before he made any hit, he had a dispute with Laura Keene, concerning some trivial affair at rehearsal, and she became highly excited. After a brief quarrel on the stage, she retired to her dressing-room, and still angry, sent for him and commenced to rate him roundly. Sothern said to her: "Stop! Laura—stop just a minute!" and advancing to the light, deliberately turned it down.

"What do you mean by that, sir?" said she, in a rage.

"Oh, nothing," rejoined Mr. Sothern, "but you have always been so lovely to me that I can't bear to look upon your beautiful face when you are in a passion. Now, go on!" She never said another word of unkindness to him during her lifetime.

MRS. VINCENT, in 'Birds of a Feather,' *pp.* 182–3.

JOHN McCULLOUGH.

1832–1885.

. . . . From the arms of the mother, in childhood a rover,
To exile he came on the wanderer's shore:
To the arms of the mother, his trials all over,
And honored and laurelled, we yield him once more.

Speak low of affection that longs to embrace him,
Speak loud of the fame that awaits him afar—
When homage shall hail him, and beauty shall grace him,
And pomp hang her wreath on the conqueror's car!

When the shadows of time at his touch fall asunder,
And heroes and demi-gods leap into light;
When the accents of *Brutus* ring wild in the thunder,
And the white locks of *Lear* toss like sea-foam in night;

When the grief of the *Moor*, like a tempest that dashes
On crags in mid-ocean, has died into rest;
When the heart of *Virginius* breaks, o'er the ashes
Of her who was sweetest, and purest, and best;

How proudly, how gladly their praise will caress him!
How brightly the jewels will blaze on his crown!
How the white hands of honor will greet him and bless him.
With lilies and roses of perfect renown! . . . .

WILLIAM WINTER.

JOHN McCULLOUGH.

John McCullough was born at Blakes, near Coleraine, Londonderry, Ireland, on Nov. 14, 1832,—the year that is memorable in this century for its association with the death of great men. His parents were situated in humble circumstances and were poor. His father, James McCullough, was "a small farmer." His mother, Mary, died in 1844, leaving her son, John, then a lad of twelve, and three daughters, Jane, Mary, and Elizabeth. Their father was unable to provide for these children, and shortly after the mother's death they were obliged to seek their fortune in emigration to America. In the spring of 1847, John and his sister Jane came to this country, and, having a cousin named John McCullough in Philadelphia, they proceeded to that city, where, walking in Front Street, young John saw the name of his relative upon a sign, and, entering the house, claimed kindred there and was acknowledged. This cousin was a chair-maker, and in the business of chair-making John McCullough was now employed. His father and the sisters, Mary and Elizabeth, followed to America shortly after this time. The father, an unsuccessful man, but independent in spirit, worked the rest of his life as a farmer in the neighborhood of Philadelphia, seeming to prefer an humble station, and declining to accept aid even from

his son, in the days of prosperity which eventually arrived. His death occurred at Moorestown, Burlington County, New Jersey, in 1878. He is remembered as a small, thin man, who spoke with a heavy brogue. He did not maintain intimate relations with his children. He was a faithful worker, but he had no ambition, and he was of a reticent and inoperative character. These ancestral peculiarities are to be noted for whatever they may happen to signify. The sisters of John McCullough were married in America. Elizabeth, his favorite sister, became the wife of Mr. Thomas Young, and died at Dunmore, Pennsylvania, in 1869. Mary became the wife of Mr. James Smith, and died at Statington, in the same State. Jane was married to Mr. John Wirth, and is a resident of Dunmore. John McCullough, shortly after he came to Philadelphia, made the acquaintance of Miss Letitia McClair, daughter of Mr. Samuel McClair, of Germantown, and to her he was married, April 8, 1849. Two children were born of this marriage,—James McCullough, July 4, 1850, and William F. Johnson McCullough, December 2, 1860. The latter died on February 25, 1886.

When John McCullough, a youth of fifteen, came to America, he could read, but he could not write. He had received no education, and he was in ignorance of literature and art. Dying thirty-eight years later (1885), he had become a man of large and varied mental requirements, a considerable scholar in the dramatic profession, and the most conspicuous heroic actor of his time on the American stage. Such a career, beginning in obscure and ignorant penury and ending in culture, honorable eminence, prosperity and

fame, is extraordinary, and in dramatic annals it makes John McCullough a memorable name.

No ancestor of his was ever upon the stage. Dramatic faculty, however, is one of the peculiar attributes of the Irish race. In McCullough it was developed by the accident of his meeting with a "stage-struck" workman in the shop of the Philadelphia chair-maker. This person, whose "spoutings" and general vagaries had at first been suggestive of lunacy, made him acquainted with the tragedy of 'Richard III.,' stimulated in him a taste for reading Shakspere, acquainted him with the delights of rehearsal, introduced him to a theatrical society, and, finally, took him to the theatre itself. The first dramatic performance that he witnessed was, according to his own best recollection, a performance of Shiel's tragedy of the 'Apostate' in the old Arch Street Theatre, in Philadelphia. From this time onward he read with avidity every play that he could obtain; and, without the distinct intention of becoming an actor,—probably with no view whatever to the future, but only from natural relish for this pursuit,—devoted his life and thought to the study of acting. One of his first steps toward the stage, taken at this period, was his affiliation with the "Boothenian Dramatic Association," of Philadelphia, a local club which held meetings and gave performances in the fourth story of an abandoned warehouse, once a sugar refinery, and of which the principal spirit was Mr. Lemuel R. Shewell, in later years an actor well-known throughout the cities on the eastern sea-board of America. McCullough took lessons in elocution from Mr. Lemuel White, a teacher of this art; and at the

house of this gentleman he became acquainted with Mr. William F. Johnson, from whom he received not only sympathy but instruction, and through whose affectionate, judicious efforts he obtained substantially all the education it was ever his lot to receive. By this adviser and comrade his mind was directed to branches of learning apart from the stage. One of the books that he read was 'Chambers's Encyclopædia of English Literature,' and in less than a month he had absorbed the whole of it, becoming so familiar with its contents that he could descant on the British authors as if he had been trained for nothing else,—so eager was his zeal for knowledge and so retentive was the memory in which he stored it.

McCullough's theatrical career, beginning in 1857 and ending in 1884, covered a period of twenty-seven years. His first engagement was made at the Arch Street Theatre, Philadelphia, under the management of William Wheatley and John Drew, and his first appearance there was made on Aug. 15, 1857, as *Thomas* in the 'Belle's Stratagem.' His rise in the dramatic profession was gradual. In the early days of the American stage it was more difficult to win position than it is in these times of speculative theatrical management, when all the arts of advertising are pressed into the business of manufacturing fame. Every step of the way had then to be made with toilsome effort. There were many obstacles to be surmounted and many hardships to be endured. The histories of Cooper, Forrest, J. B. Booth, A. A. Addams, E. L. Davenport, and Jefferson, teach the same lesson of persistent effort and of patience under privation. McCullough, in his quest of professional recognition, had the usual trying

experience; but he was in earnest and he proved the integrity of his talents, the force of his character and the sincerity of his devotion by a steadfast adherence to that service of the drama which was the purpose of his life. His novitiate at the Arch Street Theatre lasted until the summer of 1860, when E. L. Davenport, at that time manager of the Howard Athenæum, Boston, engaged him at that theatre, where he remained for one season—that of 1860–'61. In the ensuing season he was back again in Philadelphia, engaged at the Walnut Street Theatre, under the management of Mrs. Garretson. Here he was when presently he attracted the particular notice of Edwin Forrest, who chanced to be in need of an actor to play the parts second to his own, and who procured his release from Mrs. Garretson and gave him an engagement for leading business. This was "the tide which taken at the flood leads on to fortune." McCullough's first appearance with Forrest was made at Boston in October, 1861, in the character of *Pythias*. His line of parts now included *Laertes*, *Macduff*, *Iago*, *Edgar*, *Richmond*, *Icilius* and *Titus*. He co-operated with Forrest also in those plays that were the exclusive property of that tragedian—in 'Metamora,' the 'Gladiator,' 'Jack Cade,' and the 'Broker of Bogota.' In later times, when Forrest revived 'Coriolanus' (Nov. 1863, at Niblo's Garden, New York), McCullough acted *Cominius*. From the time of his engagement with Forrest he had a clear field and he advanced in the open sunshine of success.

An incident connected with his early life upon the stage is significant of his solid character and inveterate purpose. He has more than once referred to

it, in the hearing of the present writer, as having had a marked influence upon his subsequent fortunes. While yet a youth, at the Howard Athenæum, in Boston, he was suddenly summoned to play, at short notice, an important and formidable part. Davenport, then the star, had been taken ill, and could not appear. The character was *Robert Landry*, in the 'Dead Heart'—one of the longest parts in modern romantic drama. McCullough was directed, at noon, to be in readiness to come on and read it at night. He took the part home, committed the whole of it to memory within a few hours, and without previous explanation to anybody in the theatre he went on at night, letter perfect, and played *Robert Landry* in such a way as to make a hit. These facts came to the knowledge of Forrest and aroused that interest in the young actor which soon afterward took a practical form.

McCullough's professional life after he joined Edwin Forrest was not more eventful than is usual with a leading man in a theatrical stock company. He traveled through the country season after season, playing seconds to the more famous tragedian, and constantly gaining in experience and popularity. At this time he was much under the influence of the style of Forrest, and indeed he habitually imitated the manner of his leader. This was the weakness of many young actors of that period, and perhaps it was not easily to be avoided by an actor who lived and labored in constant association with that strong and singular personality. In after time, however, McCullough entirely discarded this fault; but he could at will give astonishing imitations of Forrest's peculiarities, and this he sometimes did with humorous effect. In

1866 he accompanied Forrest in a trip to California, where he was received with immediate and uncommon favor, and where he found many friends. Many of these friends were among the wealthy citizens of San Francisco, and he had not long been in that city before it was proposed by them that he should remain there as the manager of the California Theatre, in partnership with his distinguished contemporary Lawrence Barrett. This plan was sanctioned by Forrest; the enterprise was carried into effect, and McCullough remained on the Pacific Coast for eight successive seasons. The history of the California Theatre makes a brilliant chapter in his career. Plays were mounted there with magnificence; the ripe scholarship of Lawrence Barrett proved a signal service, and both Barrett and McCullough filled engagements of uncommon profit. Their partnership lasted until November, 1870, when it was dissolved by the amicable withdrawal of Mr. Barrett, and McCullough remained alone in the management. It was in the California Theatre that he first acted *Virginius*, and one by one added to his repertory the other great parts to which he had formerly played seconds under the leadership of Forrest. He remained connected with the California Theatre until 1875, when, in the ruin of the banker Ralston, he suffered a heavy loss which led to his relinquishment of that institution. It never was his ambition to be a theatrical manager.

On May 4, 1874, McCullough made his first appearance as a star actor in New York, coming forward as *Spartacus*, in the 'Gladiator.' He acted at Booth's Theatre until May 30. He was seen as *Richelieu* and *Hamlet*, and he took part as *Philip Faulconbridge*, in a

revival of 'King John,' which was effected on May 25. At the end of this engagement he returned to California to attend to the interests of his theatre in San Francisco, but in the course of the summer he came back, and when Mr. Boucicault's 'Belle Lamar' was brought out at Booth's Theatre, Aug. 10, 1874, he acted in it as *Colonel Bligh*. This was under the management of Messrs. Jarrett and Palmer. On Sept. 14, these managers produced an altered version of Otway's tragedy of 'Venice Preserved,' made by Mr. Boucicault, and in this McCullough acted *Pierre*—a character that was always a favorite with him. On the 19th he took a benefit and said farewell, and he did not appear in New York again till April 2, 1877. The interval was passed in the fulfilment of ambitious, laborious and lucrative engagements in many other cities. In the fall of 1874 he went on the Western circuit and visited New Orleans, proceeding thence to San Francisco in December and reappearing at the California Theatre, where in an engagement of four weeks he drew $36,000. He remained in San Francisco till the autumn of 1875, when he once more came North, and this time he met with extraordinary success in Washington, where, on Dec. 12, at the National Theatre, a special demonstration was made in his honor, and his performance of *Virginius* was attended by the President of the United States and the Cabinet.

In February, 1876, he had great success in Boston, where the accident of a sudden illness, which temporarily deprived him of his voice, strongly attracted toward him the public sympathy, and where, on Feb. 9, playing *Virginius* for the first time in that city, he

gained some of the brightest laurels of his life. On March 27, 1876, he reappeared at San Francisco, as *Virginius*, and was welcomed with enthusiasm. This was the season of Edwin Booth's famous Southern tour, which, under Mr. John T. Ford's management, lasted from Jan. 3 to March 3, and thereafter was continued by Mr. Booth himself, who first acted in Chicago and then went on to San Francisco, where McCullough gave him a royal reception, and in order to augment his success, acted in conjunction with him, playing such parts as *De Mauprat* and *Richmond*. This is recorded as the most remunerative dramatic engagement that ever was played on the American stage.

On April 2, 1877, he came again to New York, and it was now seen that he had made surprising advancement in his art. He appeared at Booth's Theatre as *Virginius*, and after seven performances of this part, in an engagement lasting till April 27, he performed likewise *Richelieu*, *Richard III.*, *Othello*, *Iago*, *Spartacus*, *Metamora* and *King Lear*. For his benefit on April 27 McCullough acted *Othello*, and at the close of the performance a silver laurel wreath, the gift of New York friends, was publicly presented to him on the stage, and was received by him with a speech of manliness and delicate taste. Tributes of this kind, indeed, were frequent incidents of his career, for no man ever had a larger circle of affectionate friends. An occasion of this kind had happened earlier in 1877, on March 13, when at the Southern Hotel in St. Louis many leading citizens of that place gave a public banquet to honor him, and congratulations flowed to him from every part of this land. On Feb. 9, 1878, he

received the compliment of a banquet from the Lotos Club of New York. On Nov. 9, 1878, he was the honored guest of citizens of Washington, at a public banquet at Willard's Hotel, at which General W. T. Sherman presided, and Mr. James G. Blaine was the principal orator.

On Oct. 12, 1877, performances for the benefit of Edwin Adams, then on his death-bed, took place at the Academy of Music in New York, and McCullough participated in them. A close friendship had for many years subsisted between Adams and himself, and indeed it would be difficult to imagine two human beings more accordant in generosity of temperament and gentleness of life. Adams died on Oct. 28, 1877.

McCullough took part also in the performance for the benefit of John Brougham, which was given in the Academy of Music, New York, on Jan. 17, 1878, playing the *Moor* in the third act of 'Othello.' On Feb. 7 he came out at the Boston Theatre as *Coriolanus*. His third star engagement in New York began on April 22, 1878, at the Grand Opera House, and in its third week he signalized the occasion by acting *Lucius Brutus*, in the 'Fall of Tarquin,' for the first time in the capital. In the spring of this year his professional affairs were placed under the direction of Mr. William M. Conner, who proved to him an excellent manager and a true friend. On March 13 he appeared at Syracuse, giving seven successive performances there, and receiving $500 for each performance. The receipts for the one week were $4,200. The receipts on his benefit night, when he played *Virginius*, were $1,253. It used to please him

to recall, as a contrast with this success, and as a sign of growing popularity, that when first he acted in Syracuse the house contained only $128. His next important engagement in New York began on Dec. 16 at the Grand Opera House, where he revived 'Coriolanus.' On Feb. 3, 1879, at the Boston Theatre, he effected a revival of the old play of 'Pizarro,' and acted *Rolla*, performing this old-fashioned part with dignity in the declamatory portions, and with picturesque vigor and effective pathos in the closing scene.

In June, 1880, he crossed the Atlantic and made a visit to his birthplace, where he was received with interest and kindness. While in London he made arrangements for acting there in the season of 1881. He began the new season, Sept. 5, at Utica. From Nov. 15 to Dec. 11 he was acting at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, New York. For his benefit, Dec. 10, he played *Lucius Brutus*. There were 837 persons in the gallery alone, and the receipts that night were $1,637. In the speech before the curtain McCullough said: "Whatever may become of me, whether I rise or sink, it is a comfort to reflect that the noble art of which I am an humble representative will remain and flourish as long as human nature exists." During the remainder of that season he was in the West and South. The season ended on April 2, 1881, and he had acted in thirty-four cities. On April 4 he received the tribute of a public banquet at Delmonico's, New York, at which a poem was read by William Winter. In his speech that night McCullough said: "If I succeed I shall be grateful, but not unduly elated. If I fail, I shall not be soured by disappoint-

ment. My hope is that I may prove myself not altogether unworthy of the great kindness that has been shown toward me in America, and of the good will and good opinion that have been so touchingly expressed on this occasion." On April 18 he appeared in London, at Drury Lane Theatre, as *Virginius*. The engagement lasted till May 21, and the tragedian was seen in *Virginius* and *Othello*. In his farewell speech McCullough said: "I came to you a stranger, and now I feel as if I had known you for years. You have taught me the significance and true meaning of British fair play." He returned to America in September, and began the season of 1881-'82 at St. Paul, going over much the same ground as before. On Dec. 8, 1881, for the benefit of the Poe Memorial, he played at the Union Square Theatre, N. Y., in one act of 'Richard III.' On Dec. 12, that year, at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, N. Y., he brought out the 'Bondman,' a tragic play by Lewis Wingfield, on the subject of Jack Cade's rebellion.

In the spring of 1883, he began to show signs of serious illness, and he was especially depressed and miserable at Cincinnati during the Dramatic Festival which was held there, April 29 to May 4, and in the course of which he enacted Shakspere's *Brutus* and *Othello*, and Knowles's *Master Walter*. On May 7, he retired to the home of an attached friend, Mr. John Carson, at Quincy, Ill., where he passed a considerable time in a gallant but hopeless struggle against the encroachments of his disease. On Aug. 20, 1883, he entered on a new professional season at Denver. At Christmas he was acting in Philadelphia, and as the year closed he seemed to be convalescent. Early in

Jan. 1884, he was acting in Boston, and on March 3, he appeared at the Star Theatre, New York. This was his last engagement there. Three weeks of it were devoted to *Virginius* and *Spartacus*, and one week to *Brutus*, *Othello*, *Spartacus*, *Virginius* and *Richard III.* It ended on March 29, and McCullough ended his season on April 5, at the Novelty Theatre in Williamsburg. It was evident then to those who saw him act that his powers were broken. On June 29, he sailed for Germany, seeking relief from his malady at the springs at Carlsbad, but the expedition was fruitless. He returned by way of England, passing a few days in London. It was evident on his arrival home that his mind had grown feeble and that he was considerably advanced upon the downward road to death. He resumed his work but he could not carry it forward. The final collapse occurred at McVicker's Theatre, Chicago, on Sept. 29, 1884, and he retired forever from the stage. On June 27, 1885, he was placed in a private lunatic asylum at Bloomingdale, N. Y., where he remained till Oct. 25, when he was removed to his home in Philadelphia. He died there on Nov. 8, 1885, and he is buried in Mount Moriah Cemetery in that city.

In McCullough's personal character the qualities which first attracted interest were modesty, simplicity, and manliness. Animated by a distinct professional purpose, and always resolute in its pursuit, he possessed, in an eminent degree, the calmness of a man who understands himself and the objects of his life, and who means to exercise a firm and wise control over the inward resources of his nature and all outward aids to his career. From first to last his

demeanor toward the world was gentle and propitiatory. He was aware of the deficiencies of his education. He knew his own defects. But, more than this, he had a perfectly distinct perception of what is due to others, together with a high and just sense of the magnitude of the dramatic art, the difficulties to be conquered in its pursuit, and the nature and value of success in its service. A certain sweet humility was natural to him. He never vaunted himself. He never was unduly exalted. He took success as he took failure,—with meekness. This was not an affectation,—for he well knew that his powers were uncommon, and he was fully and gladly aware of the great triumphs that he had achieved. But this strain of modesty ran through all his conduct, because it was inherent in his character. He knew what other actors had done, and he knew that there were other heights to be gained, higher than any that had been reached by him. Allied to this quality, and perhaps resultant upon it, there was in his character the attribute of thoroughness. He did not wish merely to be called a great actor; he wished to *be* a great actor; and, acting under this desire and purpose, he studied and labored at all times to make the utmost that could be made of his faculties and occasions. He left nothing to chance. He observed every detail. He considered and planned every step of his way. He always knew what he wished to accomplish in dramatic art, and he always had in his mind a distinct and practical method by which to accomplish it. He was a direct man in his art, because a direct man in his nature. Persons who saw him upon the stage, equally with persons who were

brought into contact with him in real life, were invariably impressed with the truth of his temperament. Experience of the world, indeed, had taught him the necessity of being politic in the direction of his affairs. He was not a simpleton,—he was only simple. He did not "wear his heart upon his sleeve for daws to peck at,"—but he wore his heart in his bosom, and it was an honest, tender, manly heart, sympathetic with goodness, resentful of evil, charitable and generous, faithful in its affection and easily moved to pity and to kindness. Such a nature offers no complexities for analysis. It is rooted in elemental principles of humanity and virtue. Such a man may make errors, may commit faults, may reveal occasional weakness, may be led astray by passion; but he remains essentially a lovable human being, and he is readily and rightly understood. McCullough had this fortune, and he had it for this reason. Wherever he went he carried this charm of personal worth, and he found instant sympathy and kindness. He was naturally cheerful. His rugged health and affluent physical strength harmonized with his temperament and augmented its effect. His bearing and movements had the composure that comes of power. His smile was equally indicative of pleasure in life and kindness toward others. He was an attractive man to children, to all weak or helpless persons, to all such natures as lack self-reliance, and, therefore, turn instinctively toward strength and sweetness. He had a protective air. Safety and comfort seemed to enter with him wherever he came. He was a sturdy, smiling reality of beneficent goodness, and his presence encouraged those who work and cheered those who suffer.

Whatever of policy he employed in the conduct of life was not craft,—it was the prudence which had been enforced upon him by the monitions of experience; and perhaps had he used more of this sort of policy, had he guarded and fostered his own powers and interests, and been less heedless and lavish of resources which he seemed to regard as herculean and inexhaustible, his end would not have come so soon, nor in a way so lamentable, desolate, and wretched.

McCullough's acting was essentially the flower of his character, as thus denoted. He played many parts, but the parts in which he was best—in which his nature was liberated and his triumph supreme—were distinctively those which rest upon the basis of the genial human heart and proceed in the realm of the affections. He displayed artistic resources, intellectual intention, and sometimes a subtle professional skill, in such characters as *Hamlet* and *Richelieu;* but he never was in sympathy with them, and he did not make them his own. He was an heroic actor. He towered into splendor in such situations as are provided by the closing scene in Payne's 'Brutus,' the Forum scene in 'Virginius,' the scaffold scene in 'Damon and Pythias.' He was the manly friend, to whom life and all the possessions of the world are nothing when weighed in the balance against fidelity to love. He was the fond and tender father, whose great strength became a sweet and yielding feebleness in the presence of his gentle daughter. He was the simple, truthful, affectionate, high-minded man, whose soul could exist only in honor. To ideals of this kind he gave perfect expression, and for an essential nobleness and manliness such as stimulate

human hearts to a renewed devotion to duty and a fervid allegiance to high ideals of character and conduct, he will be remembered as long as anything is remembered in the history of the stage.

WILLIAM WINTER.

At the close of their business arrangement, Forrest said to McCullough, "I believe I have kept my engagement with you to the letter; but before we part I want to thank you for your strict fidelity to your professional duties at all times. And allow me to say that I have been, most of all, pleased to see you uniformly so studious and zealous in your efforts to improve."

WM. R. ALGER: 'Life of Forrest,' *vol. ii., chap.* 16.

McCullough devoted, under ordinary conditions, more time and thought to study than many people imagined. He occupied much of his time in reading the works of Shaksperean commentators, and never lost an opportunity of improving his performances, nor did he ever reject a valuable suggestion as to make up and costume, in regard to which he considered himself particularly indebted to Mr. Steele Mackaye. He had a natural love and a finely attuned ear for poetry, and, while he was in London, would often recite Oliver Wendell Holmes's centennial tribute to Thomas Moore. I shall never think of these verses, which begin 'Enchanter of Erin,' without recalling the vibration of those deep-chested tones now for ever silent. In an artificial world, and a society particularly prone to all uncharitableness, McCullough

managed to retain a wholesome nature and an integrity of disposition that would alone render him remarkable. If he had any grievances, he never made the mistake of alluding to them, and he seemed to move through life embodying the precept of good will of all. Entirely devoid of petty malice, utterly free from professional jealousy, full of loving-kindness to those he liked, and discretely reticent concerning those who had wronged or offended even his liberal and long-suffering nature, McCullough reminded me of no character in fiction so much as the *Nabob* of Daudet. Like that simple man, he was beset with all sorts of demands and desires, and encumbered with the varied aspirations from which no successful personage is exempt, and yet he managed to keep in the good will of the people about him to an extent which the efforts of an accomplished tactician might not have attained. His friends, who were pained and saddened almost beyond expression by the piteous spectacle of his slow decay, are not unnaturally less shocked at his release by death than had he been struck down in health and strength, and those who have been in England throughout the period of his decline are glad to remember him as the John McCullough of four years ago, not merely as "the best Roman actor seen this many a day," but the strong and hearty man whose smile brightened even dull London town, and the warm grasp of whose hand was that of one whose name was truth.

CLINTON STUART, in the *Boston Herald*, Nov. 25, 1885.

Twenty years have nearly passed, since upon the

far-off shores of the Pacific I first met John McCullough. He was then just concluding, in San Francisco, an engagement with his great preceptor and friend, Edwin Forrest—an engagement doomed to be the last they should ever play together. He had already made for himself a name, being regarded as one of the young tragedians who had before him a bright and glowing future, and the kind-hearted people among whom his lot was then cast, holding their arms open to the aspiring artist, took him to their hearts as their protégé and friend, and induced him to make this city his home. For nearly nine years he lived amongst them, and though it is not my purpose to allude lengthily to his career, as that has been already sketched in the fullest manner by the journals throughout the length and breadth of the land, I feel myself compelled to touch briefly upon his management of the California Theatre, where, in conjunction with Lawrence Barrett, he inaugurated an era of theatrical representations second to none which have been given in his time, and raised the Drama on the Pacific Coast to a condition which it had never before known, and which may fitly be called its "Golden Age." If the names of the company which he selected be written now, there will be found among them those of most of the eminent actors and actresses of to-day, who, graduating from that admirable school, have since fought their way to the highest places of their profession. It was towards the more legitimate drama that our friend's tastes and inclinations always directed him, and the productions of 'Coriolanus,' 'Julius Cæsar,' 'Hamlet,' 'Cymbeline,' and others were such as have rarely been equalled

upon the English speaking stage. He was the means also of drawing towards a then little known region, the more prominent actors of the country, and displayed throughout his management an enterprise and liberality as honorable as they are rare. There is not an artist to-day who played in the California Theatre when it was under McCullough's direction, but will bear ample testimony to the almost lavish generosity which characterized his mounting of their plays—to the care with which all matters of business outside of the theatre walls were watched and tended to the great excellence of the supporting company; and, more than all, to the atmosphere of thoughtful kindness which pervaded the place, and made every one who came within its influence experience the calm comforts of a home. I know well that it is somewhat the fashion to decry actors as men of business, and in this regard our poor friend has not escaped; but the amount of thought and skill required to work to perfection the machinery of a theatre needs to be great indeed, and to find a man competent in every department is almost impossible; but in all that pertains to the absolute knowledge of the stage and its own particular requirements John McCullough was thoroughly at home, and had he not been a great actor, he would, by the force of his love for his profession, have made an admirable manager.

ADELAIDE NEILSON.

1848–1880.

And O, to think the sun can shine,
The birds can sing, the flowers can bloom,
And she, whose soul was all divine,
Be darkly mouldering in the tomb :

That o'er her head the night-wind sighs,
And the sad cypress droops and moans ;
That night has veiled her glorious eyes,
And silence hushed her heavenly tones :

That those sweet lips no more can smile,
Nor pity's tender shadows chase,
With many a gentle, child-like wile,
The rippling laughter o'er her face :

That dust is on the burnished gold
That floated round her royal head ;
That her great heart is dead and cold—
Her form of fire and beauty dead !

Roll on, gray earth and shining star,
And coldly mock our dreams of bliss ;
There is no glory left to mar,
Nor any grief so black as this !

WILLIAM WINTER.

ADELAIDE NEILSON.

"Poor Neilson," as she is remembered in admiration, mingled with pity for the tragic side of her brief life, was too rare an actress ever to be quite forgotten. When the generation she thrilled and elevated has passed away she will still figure in stage history, as one of Shakspere's memorable servants,—not such a genius as Peg Woffington, perhaps, nor an artist like Mrs. Abington, but as a great beauty, and something more than a great talent, having much in common with both. Like theirs, her bent for acting was revealed at an early age, though its development was slower. Like them, she climbed from the border-land of the slums to the highest place in the theatre of her time.

There is reason to think her dramatic powers were inherited, not so much from her mother—a Miss Brown, who was attached to a stock company that traveled in the Northern circuit—as from her father, who is believed to have been an actor in the same company, and of Spanish descent.* Certainly Adelaide Neilson's beauty favored the Spanish type, and gave

*The facts here stated with regard to Miss Neilson's early life and English career, have been derived from newspaper articles, Mr. Pascoe's 'Dramatic List,' and Mrs. Holloway's 'Souvenir'; in respect to her American career, the writer has had, in addition to his own recollection and diary, the advantage of reading the diary of Mr. Laurence Hutton, and the articles of Mr. William Winter.—C. C. B.

an air of reality to the romantic fiction innocently set forth by Mr. Pascoe in his 'Dramatic List' of her having been born in Saragossa, two years later than her real birthday. But the world will not blame her for wishing to veil the informality of her birth; and to err as to dates is no less human than feminine. After her death it was made clear that the person known to the stage as Lilian Adelaide Neilson was the same as Elizabeth Ann Brown, mentioned in the registry of births for the Leeds north district, Yorkshire, as having been born at No. 35 St. Peter's Square, on the third of March, 1848. Her mother married a Mr. Bland, variously described as a basket-maker, and as a painter and paper-hanger. They settled at Guiseley, near Leeds, where her mother afterward lived in comfort provided by her daughter who also left, by will, a stay for old age.

Little is known of the early life of Lizzie Bland, as she was called in her stepfather's family. At the time of her death there were persons in Leeds who remembered a precocious talent for recitations, and that she had carried the nickname of the "Spanish girl." She is said to have received a little schooling, to have worked in a factory, and to have served as a nurse-girl in a country family. At fourteen, she ran away to Leeds, where she had relatives, and continued the escapade to London, which she entered as a beautiful waif seeking a chance to become an actress. It is said that she was for a time a bar-maid in a little French café in the Haymarket, before she reached the coveted boards as a chorus girl or novice in the ballet.

At the age of seventeen Miss Neilson made her

début as *Juliet*, on the stage of the Royalty Theatre, and with only slight success. In the following year, 1866, she acted *Gabrielle* in the 'Huguenot's Daughter,' at the Princess's Theatre, when one of the critics described her as "remarkably pretty and interesting." Her beauty and pathos gained vogue for her playing at the Adelphi, as *Victorine*, in the drama of that name, and as *Nelly Armroyd* in 'Lost in London.' In Edinburgh (1868) she first essayed *Rosalind*, but returned to the modern drama, adding Knowles's *Julia*, and Bulwer's *Pauline* to her repertory. It was in March, 1869, that Mr. Joseph Knight remarked in the *Athenæum*, apropos of her acting of *Lilian* in 'Life for Life,' that "Practice and care are alone required to secure for Miss Neilson a high and enduring reputation." Little more than a year from that time she was the acknowledged queen of the English stage. To the critic's discernment she referred the suddenness of wider recognition; and, when it could not be misunderstood, she showed her gratitude by leaving him £1,000 in her will. After her appearance as *Amy Robsart* at Drury Lane, in September, 1870, another writer characterized her as a "true dramatic genius," albeit some fault was found with her art. Three months later her second appearance in London as *Juliet* was a complete triumph.*

Miss Neilson was the ideal *Juliet* in all that the poet could have dreamed, or the mind of spectator fancy. And as *Juliet* she carried New York by storm,

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* Other characters assumed by Miss Neilson in London, between 1868 and 1878, were *Madame Vidal* in 'A Life Chase,' *Mary Belton* in 'Uncle Dick's Darling,' *Rebecca* in the drama of 'Ivanhoe,' *Anne Boleyn* in Tom Taylor's play, *Isabella* in the 'Crimson Cross,' and *Lady Teazle*.—C. C. B.

Nov. 18, 1872. That evening had great import for her future career. She was welcomed by a public that was in the fresh enthusiasm of a Shaksperean revival, and of just her qualities there had been a lack. During the remainder of her life, she labored mainly for that public and, with one exception, submitted each new Shaksperean study first to its appreciation. Booth's Theatre, where she first appeared, had recently been built to satisfy a love for the Shaksperean drama and a sentiment in stage art at that time unique in the English speaking world. Mr. Edwin Booth, who was more than the titulary genius of the house, was still demonstrating that a great actor is not necessarily a good manager, yet it was well for Miss Neilson, in making her American *début*, to be associated with his name. The crowds that thronged the theatre saw not a representation of *Juliet*, but her very embodiment; they beheld not impassioned art which left youth and physical beauty to the imagination, nor yet the reverse; they saw a dazzling girl who *looked* the poetic qualities of the part, and whose luminous eyes and dark tresses boded the passionate fervor of the South. It did not seem to be art; the tokens of a great passion were as real as the tears; and the voice which spoke the matchless lines was so sensitive to feeling, so womanly and musical, that the spectator could not help being convinced and thrilled. *Juliet*, in fine, filled without overtopping, the compass of Neilson's own passionate and wayward character.

Her *Rosalind*, which was seen on her return to Booth's Theatre the following spring, gave no such play to her natural dramatic fervor. But she had a tallish, noble figure for the part; she made it

sparkle with playfulness, and she expressed in wonderful degree its delicate, poetic meaning. During her second visit to the United States (1874) she played *Beatrice* in 'Much Ado,' at the Lyceum Theatre, in New York, but subsequently dropped the character from her repertory. Her true sphere was the romantic drama of Shakspere, for her style was too large and elemental for brilliant comedy and at that time not massive enough for the great tragedy parts; yet she revealed new powers as *Isabella* in 'Measure for Measure,' first played by her in London in 1876, and was patiently studying *Lady Macbeth*, which, as she told Mr. Eben Plympton, she did not mean to attempt until she was forty.

She signalized her third visit to America, which began at Daly's Theatre, New York, May 12, 1877, by appearing in two new characters, to which she had devoted years of study. She opened with her first performance of *Viola* in 'Twelfth Night,' and by her command of its delicate humor and pathos, placed the part at once near to her *Juliet*. She then produced 'Cymbeline,' finding in *Imogen* full scope for her maturing powers. And it may be remarked that the chief beauty of her Shaksperean characters was the subjugation of her own personality to them. Since her death several actresses have essayed some of her great parts, and two, at least, have won success through great beauty or personal charm and stage training. But Miss Neilson, with every physical equipment, acted like one inspired by the great master himself.

In 1877 the Supreme Court of New York granted Miss Neilson a divorce from her husband, Philip Lee,

the son of an English clergyman, to whom she had borne a child that died in infancy.

Her last tour in America, which was begun at the Brooklyn Theatre, Oct. 20, 1879, was indeed, as she had announced it would be, her farewell to the stage. It was remarkably prosperous, her share of the proceeds in the Eastern States and Canada being, as it was stated, $75,000; her western trip raised the aggregate to about $100,000. Her farewell benefit in New York at Booth's Theatre, May 24, 1880, was the one hundred and eighty-fifth performance of an almost continuous series, during which she had lost but one night from illness, though she was beginning to feel great fatigue. That evening, to a crowded and tremendously enthusiastic house, she gave scenes from 'Twelfth Night,' 'Romeo and Juliet,' 'Cymbeline,' and 'Measure for Measure,' the impression made as *Isabella* affirming the grandeur of her ripened genius. At the end, her voice trembling with emotion, she made a little farewell speech, containing these words: "It seems to me that I am leaving not only friends, but happiness itself; that the skies can never again be as bright as they have been to me here, nor flowers bloom, nor music sound any more." The following day she started for California, and returned two months later to sail for Liverpool on the 28th of July. A few days after her arrival on the other side of the Atlantic her body was lying in the Paris morgue. On the afternoon of August 14, while driving in the Bois de Boulogne, she refreshed herself with a glass of iced milk. This brought on a violent attack of gastralgia, to which she was subject. Seeking shelter in the Châlet on the Rond-Royal, she suffered agonies until three o'clock in the night, when

in her writhing she ruptured a blood-vessel. A few days afterward Adelaide Neilson, whose thirty-two years had sufficed for a great career, was buried in Brompton Cemetery, London.

C. C. Buel.

Miss Neilson, who played *Lilian*, is an actress of great power. Her method in art is as yet imperfect. The demonstrations of passion are confined to low and emphasized speech, with an accompaniment of appropriate gesture. She has yet to learn that hurried and breathless accents and sharp incisive pronunciation of words are as powerful means of expressing sorrow or fear as those to which she confines herself. Her acting, accordingly, fine as it was, wanted variety. Some movements of her body were over sinuous, a few of her notes were too loud as too sustained, and her transition from tragic grandeur to girlish prettiness of speech and face was too sudden. A tendency to over attitudinizing was also displayed. Here censure ends. In the most important respects the impersonation was finest. It had true tragic fire. Some of the attitudes of Miss Neilson were full of grandeur; her utterance was musical and impressive, and her face assumed at times a look full of awe and tragic portent. The delivery of some passages had, moreover, very subtle significance. Practice and care are alone required to secure for Miss Neilson a high and enduring reputation.

London *Athenæum*, March 13, 1869.

For the character of *Amy Robsart*, it would certainly

have been difficult to find another such a representative as Miss Neilson, who, notwithstanding some faults of manner, is an actress of true dramatic genius. Her passionate appeals to the truth and honor of *Leicester* were finely contrasted with the tenderness of her love passages. In the great scene with the jealous and suspicious *Queen* in the garden at Kenilworth, her acting rose to a higher level of pathetic force; and finally her struggles with *Varney*, and her womanish terror at the prospect of death, were depicted with an intensity which powerfully excites the feelings of the audience.

London *Daily News*, Sept. 26, 1870.

Last night, at Steinway Hall, Miss Adelaide Neilson made her first New York appearance as a public reader. The house was half full of people and the occasion was wholly full of enjoyment. Miss Neilson's reading was divided, like Gaul, into three parts, and organ music, played by Mr. A. Schotte, filled all the pauses. Miss Neilson's programme comprised 'Lady Clare,' the 'May Queen,' and the 'Charge of the Light Brigade,' by Tennyson; the 'Knight and the Lady,' from the 'Ingoldsby Legends;' the Balcony scene from 'Romeo and Juliet;' a scene from Racine's 'Phèdre,' and scenes from Congreve's comedy of 'Love for Love.' There was great public enthusiasm,—as a comment on which it may be said that Miss Neilson was recalled upon the stage after each of her three retirements, and was complimented by floral gifts and genuine applause, and that though her entertainment lasted close upon two hours and a half, nobody thought it too long. As a picture, this lady

was a feast to the eye. She wore white satin, and her head was crowned with diamonds, whose lustre her beauty dimmed. We have heard that saffron-colored females, of an intellectual turn, are accustomed to sneer at Miss Neilson as a pretty woman who has no brains. This is the gravest mistake that a saffron-colored female ever made. In Miss Neilson are combined the tenderest feminine loveliness with that subtle intelligence which apprehends all meanings through the heart; and as long as man's mind is robust and wholesome such a union of attributes will have a power in the mental world that neither blue stockings, nor dyspepsia nor Bohea can shake. In her reading last night—which was a very great popular success—there was much likewise to command the homage of the critical student. Her dramatic power proved, indeed, uneven; and when she touched 'Phaedra' she employed a class of emotions that are known to her perception rather than felt in her soul. But no man who heard her read the 'May Queen'—in the pathetic part of which the tears rained from her eyes—will forget it to the last day of the longest life. To hear words of such glee and such solemn tenderness from lips so lovely and a heart so fond and good is to know what poetry means—in that inferior essence which, to use Moore's fine figure, is the fragrance of the wood that grows precious as it burns. In other parts she was sweet and grave, like some angelic child. She manifested a fine talent in the lighter comedy, a great deal of true humor, and a fire of martial enthusiasm. Certain vocal exploits, such as the crier's speech in the 'Ingoldsby Legend,' showed her resources of voice, and evoked delighted

plaudits. The rarer merit was the deeper one—of emotion always adequate, taste always true—if we except one bit in the selection of Congreve—and refinement pervading and adorning all. Miss Neilson will read again on Saturday afternoon, and she ought to have a crowded house. Those who hear her will not hear a genius and an artist like Cushman; but they will hear one of the best and most interesting of readers, and one who is accredited to her vocation by superb gifts,—of whom it might be said, in Shaksperean words:

> She hath a holy gift of prophecy,
> And sundry blessings hang about her head,
> That show her full of grace.

WM. WINTER, in the New York *Tribune*, May 8, 1874.

Her voice, than which there is no surer indication of genius in man or woman, was soft and sweet as a child's, and had a cadence in its maturer years which touched the ear of all who heard it, it was appealing, pathetic, melodious. Her mouth was more beautiful in expression than in outline; and this is true of all her features, with the exception of her eyes which were large and lustrous. Her head was small and shapely, and her ruddy brown hair well suited the pale olive-tinted complexion. She was slight of form and queenly in bearing.

LAURA C. HOLLOWAY: 'Adelaide Neilson,' *p.* 49.

Miss Neilson is an actress who thinks—a good many of them do not. The question, how to truly portray the character of *Juliet*, has filled her mind for years; and she now seeks by hard study for the answer as

earnestly as at any previous time. On her table we one day found a pocket volume of 'As You Like It.' Between its well-worn leaves were scraps of paper, torn note sheets, and fragments all written over, in her clear, bold hand, with such conclusions as she had evolved from almost every passage in the part of *Rosalind*. They were a curious study to us, for they revealed how the actress had subdued all minor details of the character to her idea of what it was in its completeness. In *Juliet* she does the same thing. And though she is a woman whose bounty is as boundless, whose love is as deep as *Juliet's*, whose passions are as strong, whose deep-set, black eyes seem Tragedy's best interpreter, her conception of *Juliet* is a mistake. She has *studied and felt it too much*, and has so imbued herself with its more sombre elements, that she sees from the first meeting with *Romeo* what *Juliet* could not see—the end, which is death. In the command to the nurse,

> Go ask his name.—*If he be married,*
> *My grave is like to be my wedding bed.*

Miss Neilson, by the deep tragical pathos which she throws into the words, gives the clue to all that is to come of hurt and misery. From that moment until the too sad ending, her art strives most to present effectively the gloomier characteristics of the tragedy. Yet they have no part in it until *Tybalt* is slain and *Romeo* is banished. Till then all is the ecstasy and intoxication of love, and *Juliet* should be hopeful as joy, glad as the sunshine. It is not alone, however, that her conception as a whole is faulty, but the execution is not always good. She does not read well at

all times, her emphasis is frequently misplaced, and occasionally she is so melodramatic as to seem not herself.

These are the faults of youth that time and experience should remove. Her merits are great and many. We do not use the word lightly when we say that Miss Neilson has genius, and that it—which some of her critics have called "personal magnetism"—so enfolds her beautiful art, as to hide from the casual observer its defects. Having genius, culture, and intelligence, youth, beauty, and grace, what more can an actress have? Nothing essential, except severe training and prolonged experience, which alone make the artist perfect.

If the girl who on that November night leaned from the balcony there—bright with the dewy sweetness of impassioned youth, glowing with the splendor of wondrous beauty, elate with the easy consciousness of her power to thrill and move to her changing moods the crowded house; her eyes burning with passion, her full lips apart half disclosing the shining teeth, her dark brown hair falling in lustrous masses upon her shapely neck and "half the polished argent of her breast to sight laid bare"—was not the *Juliet* that Shakspere drew, she was of her the most perfect counterfeit. To every eye she was a picture, and to every heart she spoke passion; the voice, when it was heard, only heightened the favorable impression, for it had that quality of velvety softness for which the voices of our English cousins are often remarkable. . . .

To ignore Miss Neilson's mere physical fitness to portray the character would be a mistake. That is properly a part of the living picture she shows us, and

if in any measure for "the golden rigol that doth bind her brows withal" she is indebted to her rare beauty, she should be as grateful therefor as for that other part,—her genius. From nature she received them both.

From the rising of the curtain to its fall there was nothing more apparent than that the actress was in exquisite sympathy with the part. So much was this the case that when in the fourth act she was told of her lover's hurt, and she seemed to affect such counterfeit distress, her eyes were swimming in real tears, and her bosom heaved with a sorrow that was not counterfeit. It was not alone the glamour of youth, beauty, and classic grace which filled the spectator's mind with pleasurable emotion, but adding to the charm of the character and the completeness of the artist's triumph were the intelligence to recognize the subtle wit, dignity, and tenderness; the exuberant vitality, the delicate refinement, and the masterful power to portray them all. In the famous scene with the nurse in 'Romeo and Juliet,' the actress gave only a hint of her ability to discharge the severest demands of the most exacting comedy; but as *Rosalind* she proved her right to all her transatlantic praises by art that was not only without a trick, but almost without a flaw. In the more tender and emotional passages of the play her quiet pathos appealed irresistibly to every heart, for underlying all she did there was a wondrous sweetness of womanly dignity and an adherence to nature which rendered the performance altogether worthy of her fame.

There were in it bits of pantomime, as when *Rosalind* quits the stage at the end of scene second, act

fifth, after she has promised every one good fortune on the morrow. Her arch smile, as she looked back at them, made her face seem half divine, and the tones of her voice were as a suffusion of sweet sounds, ranging high and ranging low, which linger with us still, though since they were heard a winter has come and gone. Her utterance of the simple words "Woo me! woo me!" to *Orlando*, as her cheek was laid upon his shoulder, and her arm stole coyly about his neck, was sweet as a blackbird's call to its mate; and again, in saying to her lover,

> Ay, go thy ways! go thy ways. 'Tis but one cast away,
> And so—come death.

the low, thrilling cadences filled the house with such mournful music, such despairing sweetness as were never heard there. The effect upon the audience was almost miraculous, for a stillness fell upon it broken only by some sobbing women in the boxes, who, in the next moment, were startled from their delicious tears by the actress's sudden change to the most jubilant laughter, evoked by her triumphant fooling of her lover.

We said that we were to judge for ourselves whether Miss Neilson deserved the fame that preceded her to America. We have judged her faithfully as we could; for the glamour that this great actress sheds upon the stage may in some degree be reflected on these pages. But, be that as it may, her art is true art; for it not only occasionally reminds us of Shakspere, but it makes Shakspere real to us. The past, and not a very remote past, may have had greater actresses than Adelaide Neilson, but we have never seen them

play *Juliet* or *Rosalind.* In the former character Miss Neilson was great every here and there, elsewhere it was the reverse of great ; but her *Rosalind*, entire or in part, seems to us, except in an occasional mistaken emphasis, to be beyond the critic's cavil.

L. Clarke Davis, in the *Galaxy*, May, 1873.

Miss Neilson, to use her stage name, happening to ask me for a little *souvenir* on her departure to Florida, I inquired what she would like best. She said she would leave it entirely to me, any trifle would be valued as a parting gift from such an old friend. Whereupon I asked her, on the spur of the moment, whether she would like a grizzly bear as an appropriate playmate and a pleasant ornament to a lady's chamber. She replied in the same spirit, "Yes, send him up," and there the banter ended. However, happening half an hour afterwards to meet Mr. Moss, the treasurer of Wallack's theatre, he mentioned that he was very much annoyed by a confounded bear that somebody had sent him from California, and which he did not know what on earth to do with. "Where is he?" said I. "At the back of the stage," said he, "with a half a dozen men sitting on his cage to keep him quiet; one of whom has already lost all his trousers and a good deal of his flesh through the bars." "Good," said I, "I will relieve you of him. I know just where to place him." No sooner said than done, and in half an hour "Grizzly" was landed at the Fifth Avenue Hotel by four porters with a stout chain about as big as the cable of a man-of war, and a muzzle like a fire-grate in the middle of Miss Neilson's drawing-room and a numerous company of guests, who had called to

bid the fair *Juliet* adieu. Miss Neilson took the jest in good part, kept her temper, and tried to keep her bear; but that was an effort beyond her, and Bruin was finally presented to the Zoological Gardens in Central Park, thus ending the modern adaptation "with a difference," of the old story of Beauty and the Beast.

E. A. SOTHERN, in the *Era Almanac*, 1875, *pp.* 76–7.

When Avon's Bard his sweetest music scored,
A woman's vision with the numbers blent;
His weaving fancy robed the form adored,
And each the other equal beauty lent.

O Poet! didst thou haply see again
In living presence playful *Rosalind*,
Sweet *Viola*, and saintly *Imogen*,
Fair *Juliet*, swept by passion's withering wind?—

'Twas thine to give the music-mated lines,
But Heaven alone empowers the counterpart
To walk in splendor where such genius shines.
Twice happy we, blest heirs of dual art:

To own as mother tongue Will Shakspere's writ—
To live when kindling Neilson voices it.

CLARENCE CLOUGH BUEL, in *Scribner's Monthly*, July, 1880.

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